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SHADOWS ON THE WALL

BY

F. W. BOREHAM

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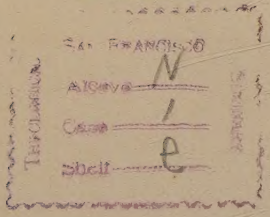

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THE figures that float across these pages are like shadows dancing on the wall. They show that life is crowded with *realities* and flooded with *radiance*, for without *substance* and *sunshine* there can be no shadows.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

ARMADALE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA,
Easter, 1922.

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PART I

I

THE GLORY-BOX

I HAVE never seen a glory-box. I know nothing of its size, of its shape, of its design, nor of the timbers usually employed in its construction. As to its contents, I should regard it as a sacrilege to hazard a conjecture. I hear young ladies *talking* of their glory-boxes; but they never by any chance *exhibit* one. I have looked into upholsterers' windows in the hope of seeing several types displayed; but have met with unvarying disappointment. I have searched the advertising columns of the newspapers. Everything on earth seems to be *for sale*—except a glory-box! And, more strangely still, everything on earth seems to be *wanted*—but a glory-box! Even the dictionary declines to help me. Yet, after all, my ignorance of my subject need not deter me from writing about it. I shall therefore hesitate no longer.

The glory-box is the symbol of all those things by means of which we cast a halo of romance about the brows of futurity. It is an extraordinary knack we mortals have. Although, in common with ourselves, the beasts of the field have eyes in their faces, they cannot see in front of them. Like the hare with the hounds at her heels, they can see *behind;*

memory serves them well; bygones never become bygones; animals possess an uncanny facility for cherishing the recollection of any kindness or cruelty shown them. They can see *around;* no eyes are more sharp than theirs in detecting the tiniest objects on the horizon and in reading their significance. But they cannot see *ahead.* Or, if they do, they see but a short distance ahead. A dog may dread the blow that he knows he has deserved, or he may wag his tail in prospect of the reward that he is conscious of having earned; but that is as far as it goes. Generally speaking, *they* live in one world and *we* live in another. They live in *To-day* and we live in *To-morrow.* Among these poor relatives of ours there is nothing of that wistful anticipation in which we humans so often lose ourselves. Their hearts do not build their nests, as ours do, in the shelter of the years unborn. The blackbird in my appletree and the thrush upon my lawn sing me the most exquisite songs; but they always sing of the springtime that has just arrived or of the summer all around them. They never, never sing of next year's roses. Tennyson has a lovely little poem in which he imagines all the wild things of the woods listening to the song that the poet is singing. They are captivated, enthralled, enchanted. They sit spellbound as they drink it in. 'I have sung many songs,' says the nightingale, 'but never a one so gay!' And then the reason breaks upon the bird. The melody of the poet is

so much more blithe than his own because he is singing, not of the things that *are,* but of the things that *shall be.* His vision is beyond. He is thridding the labyrinth of the future. His soul in passing down the avenue of the years that are yet to be.

The glory-box represents our genius for piercing the veil that conceals the good time coming. Man invariably sees things through the golden haze of futurity. In the slender sapling he sees the spreading oak; in the mottled egg he sees the soaring bird; in the wrinkled seed he sees the fullblown flower. To himself he is always the tadpole of an archangel. He sings the songs of the eternities. His *To-day* may be a pauper; what does it matter? His *To-morrow* will be a prince! Look at this young man and maiden! *He* is off to the office and *she* trips away to her workroom. For both of them the day's routine will be extremely prosaic, extremely monotonous, and extremely commonplace. They will go the same old round and discharge the same old duties. Yet *he* strides off to the office with an elastic step, whistling gaily as he goes; and *she,* as she takes to the familiar road, almost dances to the song her lips are crooning. And why? It is because a golden secret is shining in their faces. They are dreaming rainbow-tinted dreams. There is a glory-box! The glory-box is the symbol of life's greatest expectations.

Of really great expectations, life holds but three.

There are others, of course, just as there are innumerable summits in a range of mountains; but three sky-piercing peaks break from the rest and dwarf all others into comparative insignificance. Other expectations—expectations of power or place or wealth—come only to certain ranks and certain classes. Some are too low to cherish such hopes; others are already too high to care about them. But there are three sublime expectations that come, and that come with equal force, to all kinds and conditions of men. They mean no more to the prince than to the peasant; they mean no more to the peasant than to the prince. The *first* is the great expectation to which I have already referred; the expectation that sweethearts cherish; the expectation to which the glory-box immediately points; the expectation of marriage. Is there anything more delightful than to watch a young couple who have recently become engaged? There is a sense in which the engagement makes no difference; they felt that they belonged to each other before their troth was actually plighted, or the engagement would never have been made. And yet, on the other hand, there is a sense in which the engagement makes all the difference. Yesterday there was a shadow of shyness, a suspicion of embarrassment, when, in the presence of others, they were thrown together. To-day they appropriate each other with a proud and pleasing confidence; they are even gratified rather than confused when other eyes

are on them. When with her lady friends *she* loves to show an exaggerated and almost matronly interest in all kinds of household and domestic affairs; *he,* in the presence of other gentlemen, displays pleasure when the conversation turns to architecture, horticulture, and similar themes. A few days ago a reference to a glory-box would have provoked a blaze of blushes; to-day it is mentioned almost as a matter of course. Each feels in secret that life has become strangely but sweetly loaded; the soul is weighted by a solemn but beautiful responsibility. It is a burden; but it is a burden that, like ballast, lends a new poise and a new dignity to every phase of conduct and behaviour. For both of them life has been transfigured by a great and golden expectation.

The *second* of the three I must resolutely decline to mention. Some years ago, at Hobart, I officiated at the wedding of a young couple to whom we were all very much attached. To our great regret they were leaving the district to make their home in a provincial town in Victoria. Quite recently I was invited to lecture in the neighbourhood in which they settled. I accepted the invitation, and, a few days later, received a letter from the bride of seven years since, insisting on my staying at her home during my visit to the town. Again, I accepted; and, in due time, the evening arrived. My former bridegroom met me at the railway station. I could see that he was excited. His eyes were sparkling; his nerves

were tingling; his blood was dancing. So dull-witted and unimaginative are we men that I was stupid enough to fancy, for the first moment or two, that his delight arose from the pleasure of meeting an old friend! But I was swiftly disillusioned. Whilst a cab was being engaged, and a few minor details arranged, my friend took my arm and walked with me up and down the platform. And then, in a burst of confidence, he told me a wonderful secret. I use the explosive word advisedly; it was a *burst* of confidence. It simply oozed from him; he could not have kept it to save his life. For the next two or three days I was their happy guest. Of course, we never discussed their secret, never even referred to it. Yet it was always there. It sang to us at every meal, so that it almost drowned our voices when we talked on commonplace topics. My host and hostess were enthusiastic temperance workers; but, if champagne had flowed freely round their table, we could scarcely have felt a livelier sense of exhilaration. On the last morning of my stay, I led them in family worship and made overt allusion to the secret that had flooded the home with such unutterable gladness. When we rose from our knees, I noticed tears in both their eyes. And I noticed something else. I noticed that life stands transfigured at every turn by its great expectations.

The *third* of the three is the radiant expectation of immortality. It attends us all through life and grows upon us towards the close. We feel that we

are greater than the universe; the eternal harmonies are for ever echoing through our souls; however lovely life may be, we feel that there is more, immensely more, to follow. And, later on, when friends depart and frailties multiply, expectation becomes very wistful and the dread of death is swallowed up in the hope of life eternal. By these great expectations—these and a thousand smaller ones—we men are made. With a few expectations life is princely; without them it is poor as poverty. The man who teaches us to expect something of life makes life sublime. If ever I am appointed a Police Magistrate—I have no reason to suppose that such a dignity awaits me—I shall administer justice on principles peculiarly my own. I shall be very lenient with fortune-tellers. At least I shall deal gently with those fortune-tellers who assure their delighted patrons that all the stars are favourable and all the indications propitious. And I shall vindicate the majesty of the law by visiting its most extreme penalties on the heads of those wretched prognosticators who depress their victims by muttering dark and terrifying forebodings. In *The Light in the Clearing*—a book which the author asks us to regard as history rather than fiction—Irving Bacheller describes the effect upon the life of his hero of a prediction uttered by Roving Kate, the Silent Woman. 'I see her now,' he says, writing after the lapse of many years, 'I see her dark figure standing against the sunlight. I was afraid of her, she looked so wild

and ragged. I regarded her as a dead but undeparted spirit belonging to another world. What a singular eloquence in her pose and in her gestures and in her silence!' The old woman looked at him, her blue eyes searching him through and through. Then 'slowly her right hand rose above her head with its index finger extended. She lowered it. It rose again with *two* bony fingers outstretched, and descended as before. She repeated this gesture until her *four* thin fingers had been spread in the air above her. How it thrilled me! Something jumped to life in my soul at the call of her moving hand. I passed a new gate of my imagination; and, if I have a way of my own in telling things, it began at that moment.' The old woman sat down on the grass and scrawled out her prediction.

'I hear guns; I hear many voices. His name is in them. He shall be strong. The powers of darkness shall fear him; he shall be a lawmaker and the friend of many people; great men shall bow to his judgment and he shall——'

The sentence was never finished; but, as far as the prophecy went, it all came true. But the question is: *Why* did it all come true? Could the ragged woman read the future? Of course not. She simply gave the sensitive, imaginative boy something to expect, something to live up to. He began to struggle towards the goal that she had proposed for him. Morning, noon, and night, he repeated the words to himself and vowed that they should be fulfilled.

When he was half-way to destiny, he tells us, he felt Old Kate still at work in his soul. *'I was trying,'* he says, significantly, *'to put truth into the prophecy!'* Exactly! The old woman's mysterious airs, her weird silence, and her impressive gestures were all just so much hocus-pocus and mumbo-jumbo. Her pretensions to second sight were all nonsense. Yet she was a benefactor, a public benefactor, for all that. For she fired the fancy of the boy with a great expectation; and that great expectation made a man of him.

The dazzling genius of Horatio Nelson was never displayed to greater advantage than in his immortal signal at Trafalgar. 'Mr. Pasco,' he said, as he stepped on to the poop of the *Victory* and addressed the signal-lieutenant, 'Mr. Pasco, I wish to give a fillip to the whole fleet.' And how did he compass his end? He did it by presenting every man with a great expectation! 'England expects that every man this day will do his duty!' *'England expects!'* At the *first* of those two words, every sailor in the fleet saw, in sudden fancy, the old home circle; at the *second* he saw a look of fond and wistful expectancy mantle those familiar features; and he vowed that their hope should not be disappointed. The strategy that tore to shreds the naval aspirations of Napoleon was masterly; but the psychological insight that dictated that famous signal was more astonishing still.

'It was the great Lord Shaftesbury that made a

new man of me,' exclaimed Edward Maynard at a testimony-meeting in the East End of London. 'And it wasn't by a sermon or a lecture or anything like that,' he went on. 'It was when I came out of prison for the nineteenth time. I sort of took it for granted that I'd have to go to the bad and that I should soon be back for my twentieth term; but Lord Shaftesbury walked up to me and shook hands and said, "Ah, Maynard, we'll make a man of you yet!" I felt that he really expected me to turn out well, and I pulled myself together that very day. That was forty-three years ago come Michaelmas, and I've never seen the inside of a cell since!'

It is always those who expect most from us who draw the best out of us. Who has not admired the skilful and delicate turn which Jesus gave to that memorable conversation in the course of which he warned Peter of the sifting that awaited him. He foresaw the temptation and the tragedy; but he added: *'but, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.'* It was like pointing to a light on the far side of the dark valley; it was a promise of a cloudless morning after a stormy night. Even when Peter went out and wept bitterly, there was a song singing itself over and over again in the depths of his stricken soul. *'When thou art converted . . . strengthen thy brethren!'* What did it mean? It meant that his Master had foreseen the fall with all its baseness and its treachery—*'thou shalt deny*

me thrice.' But it meant also that his Master, knowing the very, very worst, had yet confidently anticipated the dawning of a day in which the coward should be the bravest of the brave and in which the weakling should be the fortifier of all the apostolic band. It was by means of a sublime expectation that Peter was led from the depths of shame to a life of service and a martyr's crown.

II

A PAIR OF SCALES

I

Mrs. Blundell's store looked for all the world as if it had lost its way and had given up as a bad job all hope of finding it again. It was a very small store, standing in the midst of a residential area about a mile or so from the centre of the town. It seemed to feel that it had no right there, for it lay a long way back from the street and crouched behind some spreading shrubs that almost concealed it from the view of passers-by. You had to go in at the gate and up the walk past the laurels and the lilacs to get to it. There were no other shops anywhere near it, and, indeed, you would never have detected the presence of this isolated outbreak of commercialism in the heart of such a neatly-lawned and daintily-gardened villadom had not the walls of Mrs. Blundell's cottage proclaimed at the tops of their strident voices the extraordinary merits of somebody's mustard, somebody else's blue, and a third person's incomparable cocoa.

It was strange that Mrs. Blundell's walls were so loud, for Mrs. Blundell herself had the gentlest of voices. She was a soft-footed little creature with spectacles. She had a stoop at the shoulders which

brought her down to the level of the children who thronged her shop, and we almost felt that she was one of us. She wore a shawl crossed over her breast and, on cold days, a muffler thrown around her head. Mrs. Blundell was not exactly a grocer, although, as the gaudy and ill-matched advertisements suggested, she dealt principally in groceries. It would be nearer the truth, perhaps, to describe her as an emergency grocer. None of the ladies in the vicinity sent the week's orders to Mrs. Blundell. Had they done so, Mrs. Blundell would have been almost as much astonished as if one of the big stores had sent to her for its wholesale supplies. No, no; each of the ladies living in the surrounding villas had her own grocer in town; a representative called at regular intervals for orders; and, within a few hours, the heterogeneous assortment of appetising packages was duly delivered at the door. But the most skilful and experienced housewife cannot think of everything; and, besides, situations arise that cannot by the shrewdest foresight be anticipated as the grocer's man stands with his pencil and book just inside the kitchen door. When, in our house, such contingencies arose, somebody had to scamper off post haste to Mrs. Blundell's; and as the responsibilities and dignities of seniority had to be supported by my shoulders, the negotiations with that excellent lady were usually entrusted to me. Mrs. Blundell came to be regarded, therefore, as the stand-by of the neighbourhood. We

could not have done without her. If, on waking some fine morning, we had been told that one of the big stores in the busy part of the town had been burned to ashes in the night, I am afraid we should have clapped our hands in glee. The news would have imparted the piquant relish of a new sensation to the conversation at the breakfast table; and we should all have been eager to rush away to see the smouldering ruins, the helmeted firemen, and all the rest of the fun. But if we had been told that a similar disaster had overtaken Mrs. Blundell's little store, I really believe we should have cried. At any rate our spirits would have been weighted with a sense of dire calamity. As far as the town shops were concerned, Mother could easily transfer her orders to another grocer; but how could we possibly manage without Mrs. Blundell?

My visits to Mrs. Blundell were usually paid on Saturday mornings. I scarcely know why. Perhaps the atmosphere of Saturday morning is particularly favourable to the development of such domestic emergencies as Mrs. Blundell's stock was designed to meet; or perhaps the eventualities of Saturday morning tended to expose the omissions that had characterized the list of orders entrusted to the regular grocer; or perhaps it was that Saturday morning usually found us within call of the kitchen. Be that as it may, it was usually on a Saturday morning that I found myself on my way to Mrs. Blundell's. My errands, I remember, were of two distinct kinds.

Sometimes I was emphatically commanded to hurry back: those commissions had no attraction for me. But now and again I was told that I need not hurry; *those* were the visits I enjoyed.

For, on those rare but delightful occasions, I was able to indulge in a talk with Mrs. Blundell. If there were other boys or girls in the shop—and I never remember seeing any adults there—I politely stood back until they had all been served. I liked being alone with Mrs. Blundell. She took from the shelves the pink and blue and white hyacinths that were growing in the vases in which they stood and which held for me a perpetual interest. She told me about the little boys that she once had, and what they did and what they said. One of them was a sailor: he went away into the China seas and never came back. Mrs. Blundell showed me a picture of the great four-masted merchantman, and touched her eyes with her shawl as she did so. She took me through into her cosy little parlour. On a table by the window she had a bowl of gold fish. I have visited many aquariums since then; but none of them interested me as much as that one. Then there was Mrs. Blundell's big tortoise-shell cat: I liked to hear her tell of the mice he had caught in the store-room at the back.

And one day, to my unbounded delight, she let me go behind the counter. I saw the funny little places in which she kept all kinds of funny little things; I saw the till and all the money in it; I saw

lots of things that I have since forgotten; and I saw one thing that, to my dying day, I shall never forget. I had often watched Mrs. Blundell carefully weighing out the sugar and butter and biscuits for which I had been sent; but now I saw the scales from another point of view. And on the back of the base of the scales, I saw some letters! Letters interested me; I was learning letters at school; and these letters on the scales awoke my boyish curiosity. I tried to make them out, but some of the words were too long for me and I had to give it up. I asked Mrs. Blundell what the letters meant, and she spelt them out with me. 'A FALSE BALANCE IS ABOMINATION TO THE LORD BUT A JUST WEIGHT IS HIS DELIGHT.'

'There!' she said, as she arranged my purchases in the basket I had brought, 'you can keep saying that to yourself all the way home, can't you? Never mind about the long words in the first part, but remember, *"a just weight is His delight!"*' And she filled my pocket with peppermints from a very well-known jar and came to the door to see me off.

'Don't forget!' she called, meaningly, as I turned the corner.

And I never did.

II

Very vividly do I remember that, as I made my way home that Saturday morning, swinging the basket first on one arm and then on the other, and

repeating—with as clear an enunciation as the presence on my tongue of a huge peppermint would permit—the words that I had seen inscribed upon the scales, it occurred to me that, if *a just weight is His delight,* God is very easily pleased. I had never thought of God in that way before. I always went to church with father and mother on Sundays, and only occasionally found the service tedious. I had been encouraged to pay attention to all that the minister said, and, as I was genuinely attached to the minister and regarded him as one of my boyish heroes, I found the task by no means difficult. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that I had thought a good deal about God, and had formed certain vague ideas as to the kind of thing that gave Him pleasure. I had always understood that lives of eminent piety and deeds of beautiful devotion were peculiarly pleasing in His sight. I had no doubt that those who administered their wealth with generosity or endured their poverty with cheerfulness, those who used their power with magnanimity or bore their sufferings with resignation, earned for themselves a consciousness of the divine approval. I heard from the pulpit of men and women who lived lives of the most heroic fortitude and died deaths of splendid self-sacrifice. These, I said to myself, are His delight. I could readily understand it, for they were *my* delight, too. The interest awakened by these reflections was, however, of the most languid kind. It made no direct appeal. For how could I, a school-

boy, hope to attain to such a lofty standard? But here, on Mrs. Blundell's counter, was a new idea! God found delight in the iron weights that I had so often seen in Mrs. Blundell's mittened hands. I shall never forget the surge of emotion that swept over my mind as that thought took possession of me. It was one of childhood's continental discoveries.

Here, on the southern fringe of this great Australian continent, we have a huge system of glorious lakes. I have just spent a most delightful holiday in exploring them. Each day we invaded, in our little motor launch, some fresh expanse of shining waters. At our approach, vast clouds of swans, pelicans, cormorants and moorhens rose before us, and wheeling round in graceful semi-circle, settled again on the waters behind. The shores were draped in virgin bush, the home of the opossum, the wombat and the kangaroo. The forestry was musical with the ceaseless tinkle of the bell-birds; parrots and kookaburras flew hither and thither; in the swampy land near the edge of the lake the grey crane and the white ibis found delight. From the foundation of the world, these great lakes lay, connected by various openings and canals with each other, but sharply divided from the sea. A narrow belt of land, scarcely a hundred yards across, intervened between the outermost lake and the ocean thundering on the shore near by. Then came the black men, and things continued as they were. Then came the white men, and the white men built towns on the shores of

the lakes and on the banks of the rivers that flowed into them. And as these inland towns sprang up, the white men fastened their attention upon the narrow strip of land that stood between the ocean and Lake King. Why not cut through it and open all those inland towns to the navigation of the world? And so, one day, the engineers began their work; the canal was cut; the ocean came surging into the lakes and the lakes became a part of the ocean; and to-day great steamers make their way through lakes and rivers to those little inland towns.

As I walked home that Saturday morning with my basket on my arm, an engineering feat of a somewhat similar kind was accomplished in my mental world. Up to that moment, money and weights and groceries and all such things had been so many landlocked lakes. On Sundays I had been accustomed to leave them all behind, to cross the narrow belt of coast-line, and to see the ocean of the infinite as it thundered on life's shore. But these two sets of things—Sunday things and week-day things—dwelt apart; the dividing territory was very narrow, but the separation was absolute. On that Saturday morning, however, the canal was cut. The ocean came surging into the lakes and the lakes became part of the ocean. God—the God of Whom I had heard in the pulpit—suddenly became associated with the groceries in Mrs. Blundell's store. He was interested in the things she sold me! He was pleased with the measure she gave me! *'A just weight is*

His delight!' If that is so, I said to myself, He is more easily pleased than I had thought! If *a just weight is His delight,* why, then, anyone can please Him! I have heard men speak of the spiritual exaltation that overtook them as they felt themselves caught in the sweep of a great religious revival. Some such golden moment came to me that morning as I returned with my basket from Mrs. Blundell's store.

III

All this was many years ago. You may search in vain to-day for the little shop that peeped out shyly from behind its veil of shrubs. Perhaps it found its way after all and slipped off to join its comrades in the centre of the town. Or, perhaps, to the sorrow of a later generation of schoolboys, the red flames swept it from the planet. However that may be, it is not there. And poor little Mrs. Blundell is at rest. Yet, whilst she and the shop have passed away, the impression that she made upon my mind that memorable morning has deepened with the years.

For, on thinking it over since, I have discovered significances in the words on Mrs. Blundell's scales that did not dawn upon me as I scampered home that day. I have come to see that, if they mean anything, they mean that God recognises the charm of habitual goodness. The weight on the scales affects every purchase made in the shop. If the

balance is false, it is false all day and every day. If the weight is just, it is just all the time. The divine mind finds a special delight in the justice of the people who are habitually just, in the goodness of the people who are habitually good, in the kindness of the people who are habitually kind. It is all very well to be occasionally just; it is better to be good now and again than never to be good at all; there is a certain merit in the kindness of people who are kind by fits and starts. But *'a just weight is His delight,'* for he knows that a just weight represents, not merely a spasmodic, but a constant standard of equity.

It is pleasant, too, to reflect that God identifies Himself with every customer who enters the shop. All sorts of people sent to Mrs. Blundell's store. Poor people sent from the cottages; rich people sent from the villas; and little children, rewarded with pence or half-pence for the errands that they ran, came excitedly back to purchase acid drops, chocolates, or jujubes. If the balance is false, they are all cheated; and *that,* according to the sentence on the scales, is *an abomination unto the Lord.* If, on the other hand, the weight is just, they all get full measure; and that, according to the words that Mrs. Blundell made me learn, *is His delight.* I knew that some such principle operated in relation to the *charities* of life. A cup of cold water given in His name is given to Him. He identifies Himself with the receiver. But the sentence inscribed on Mrs.

Blundell's scales shows me that the same principle holds true of the *commerce* of life. He identifies Himself with every purchaser who enters a shop; is grieved whenever one is deceived; is delighted whenever one is treated with consideration and with probity.

One other reflection has come with the years, although I fancy that some hazy inkling of it must have drifted into my mind that Saturday morning. If God has such a passion for justice that He finds delight in the iron weights on Mrs. Blundell's counter, how just He Himself must be! And that is vital. I was chatting only yesterday with a friend of mine, a Jewish rabbi. We were discussing the difference between the general trend of his teaching and the general trend of mine.

'We speak more of the divine justice than you do,' he said. 'You lay more stress on God's pity and mercy and love; but we feel that all these are comprehended in His justice. Men are often unjust in showing pity; their pity is mere weakness. At other times they are unjust in withholding pity; their sternness is vindictive. But God is always and everywhere scrupulously just. His pity is a just pity; His mercy a just mercy; His love a just love. His justice includes everything. If you make men feel that God is just, you win their confidence; they find it easy to trust Him.'

There is something in it. Every reader of Charles Reade's *Peg Woffington* will recall the scene in which

the starving family in the attic are startled at the father's wild, despairing words. His wife has suggested that they pray. He scorns the idea.

'Children!' cries the wife, terrified lest perchance her husband's words should have harmed their young souls, 'children! the sky is higher than the earth, and heaven is higher than the sky, and *heaven is just*!'

We may leave it at that. There are many things in this world that I do not understand, and the world to come is shrouded in impenetrable mystery. But since *'a just weight is His delight,'* I can afford to wait for the explanation of the things that happen here, and I can keep a quiet heart in relation to the things that shall be hereafter.

III

THE ANCHOR WATCH

I

THEY were sunshine evenings in the Mosgiel Manse when Davie happened to drop in. His familiar knock on the back door sent a thrill through everything and everybody in the place. Davie always came to the back door; always stood back a few feet after he had knocked; and, when the door was answered, he always approached mysteriously and inquired, in a whisper that could be heard at the other end of the house, 'Anybody in?' For Davie had a horror of visitors. He could only be persuaded to enter on receiving our solemn assurance that we were spending the evening by ourselves. I have known him, when the front-door bell had interrupted one of his stories, to slip out into the kitchen, and, if he heard the new-comer enter the dining-room, creep stealthily away without so much as a good-night. He had the most implicit confidence in our integrity, but, for all that, we could never persuade him to hang his hat in the hall. He insisted on carrying it with him into the room and slipping it under his chair. He felt that an orderly retreat would be rendered more easy under these conditions.

Shakespeare says that each man in his time plays many parts. Davie certainly had. He was a deacon of the church when I knew him, but he had not always lived in such an odour of sanctity. You had but to look at him to see that he had roughed it. His clean-shaven face was as round as the rising sun, and the complexion of a Red Indian would have seemed pale in comparison. He had a dangerous twinkle in his eye; his lips said all manner of roguish things silently; whilst his laugh awoke every echo in the building. As a boy he ran away from home and went to sea. As a man, he ran away from the sea and made for himself a home. He told both stories in such a way that you could never tell of which escapade he was most proud. Between that boyish flight from a Welsh village, and that desertion of his ship in a New Zealand port, many years elapsed; but, for all that, he had not been all his days a sailor. He had done a little poaching, and a little smuggling, and a little mining, and a little shearing. Indeed, in my days he used once a year to pack his swag and set off for the great sheep-runs out-back, and, until the shearing season was over, we saw Davie no more. But Davie liked to think of himself as a sailor, and all his stories had the tang of the sea upon them. He was a Sunday-school teacher, and the boys in his class worshipped the ground he stood upon. He illustrated every lesson from the wealth of his own adventurous experience. Whenever I looked in at the school,

he was describing the way in which he was rescued from sharks, from shipwreck, or from a burning vessel. I used to feel sorry for the other teachers. Davie had a voice like a speaking-trumpet. Every word that he addressed to his own class could be heard in every corner of the building. Teachers who had spent their lives in workrooms, shops, and offices found it very difficult to hold their own against Davie. When Davie was in particularly fine form they occasionally gave it up as a bad job. I have seen them sitting in silence, their hands folded on the books in their laps, whilst their classes turned round and caught the thrill of Davie's seafaring adventures.

II

'The worst night I ever spent at sea,' he used to say, 'was on my first voyage. We were caught in a terrific gale off the South American coast. Just when we all thought that we must either founder at sea or be driven ashore, the skipper made out a headland away to the south behind which he expected to find shelter. It took some manœuvring, I can tell you, and once or twice we thought it was all over with us. But he could handle a ship as some men can handle a horse, and, after a stiff fight, we managed to crawl round the point and anchored. That night he put me on the anchor watch. I shall never forget it as long as I live. The night was as black as pitch; I could scarcely see my hand before

me. The wind was shrieking through the rigging and I could hear the breakers booming on the shore.

'"Look here, youngster," the skipper said to me before turning in, "everything depends on that cable, do you see? If that anchor threatens to drag, let me know double-quick!"

'That night,' Davie went on, 'was the longest night I ever spent. I kept feeling that cable to see if the anchor held or if we were drifting shorewards before the gale. Once I rushed down and awoke the skipper, but when he came on deck and put his hand to the cable he laughed at me. I had mistaken the grating of the spare chain on the rocks for the dragging of the anchor. Towards morning the gale blew itself out, and we got away again soon after daylight; but, my word, I shall never forget my first night on the anchor watch, I can tell you!'

This, in bald outline, is one of the stories that Davie told us by the fireside at the Manse. As *he* told it, with graphic detail and excited gesture, it held us spell-bound and almost froze our blood. It is many a long year since I saw Davie's eloquent eyes and weather-beaten face. The silver must be creeping into his hair now. But the thought of him as he sat there, lost to everything in the excitement of the story he was telling, often revisits me. A trifling circumstance will sometimes revive a tremendous memory. A little thing happened this morning which, like a flash, hung the chambers of imagery with the picture of Davie as, sitting by

the Manse fire, with his hat peeping out from under his chair, he told us the story of the anchor watch.

III

'Hear me say my text for Sunday school!' said Stella, as she handed me her Bible.

'Well, go ahead!'

'We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.'

'Good! Run along!'

She ran along; but she left me thinking. 'Lest at any time we should let them slip!' I could not quite catch the idea; so I consulted the Revised Version. And it was the Revised Version, fortified by Dr. Weymouth and Dr. Moffatt, that revived the memory of Davie and his story. For the Revised Version says that 'we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we *drift away* from them.'

'Lest we *drift away* from them!'

The drifting ship!

The dragging anchor!

I could see Davie crouching in the bows in the darkness, with his hand on the trembling cable.

IV

The mere mention of Davie's name brings back to mind some of his quaint sayings and random recollections. He simply overflowed with them.

'I used to poke fun at the skipper sometimes,' he would tell us, with a far-away look and a reminiscent smile, 'but he had a long head and a smart tongue, and was always one too many for me. Whenever things were getting a bit mixed, he would go to his cabin and unroll his charts.

' "They're very pretty pictures," I said to him one day, "and you seem to have a lot of faith in them. I believe, if we get cast ashore, you'll come here for the pictures to pull the ship off!" But he knew his business, and paid me back in my own coin.

"No, Davie," he said, "charts won't get a ship off the rocks, my boy. That's why I make the most of them whilst we are in deep water. Prevention is better than cure, they say; and I'm not of that way of thinking."

And, somehow, the incident again relates itself to Stella's text. For surely that is the force of the *'lest'*!

The captain gives earnest heed to the charts *lest* he drift unconsciously shorewards! 'We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard *lest* haply we drift away from them!' The charts will not help the vessel once she is fast upon the jagged reef! The things that we have heard will be of small value to us once we have suffered shipwreck.

V

One lovely Sunday afternoon I strolled down to

the school towards closing time, and found Davie monarch of all he surveyed! He was lost in his story; the eyes of his boys were glued to his eager and animated face; and his stentorian tones rang through the whole building. The other teachers—even the men—had given up in despair. Although he was blissfully unconscious of it, he was addressing the entire school. I was too late to hear the story itself, but I think it must have been the tale of his anchor watch. For, when I entered, he was saying earnestly:

'I tell you, boys, it doesn't matter which way the wind is blowing, every wind is *against the anchor.* The wind may chop about—North, South, East, or West—but the ship will go round with the wind and the strain on the cable will be just the same. I don't know if you boys will be rich or poor. You may succeed in life or you may fail. But, mind, I've told you! Riches or poverty, success or failure; they're all the same. They all put a strain on the cable. Every wind that blows is blowing *against the anchor.* Don't forget that! However things may go with you, you'll always need the anchor watch!'

'Lest we drift!' says Stella's text.

'You'll always need the anchor watch!' says Davie.

VI

Since Stella and Davie between them have set

my mind running along this line of things, I have examined the word a little more narrowly.

To *drift*!

To *drift away*!

'Lest we *drift away from them*!'

And I find that some of my most trusted instructors interpret it in a way that would be much to Davie's taste.

'Lest we *let them slip*!' says the Authorized Version.

'Lest we *drift away from them*!' says the Revised.

'Lest we *float past them!*' say Dr. Alford and a host of others.

I remember many years ago, in New Zealand, arranging a moonlight shooting expedition. John Broadbanks and I, with our wives and families, were spending our holidays together in the depths of the bush, miles and miles from everywhere.

'We'll take our guns down to the boat after tea,' I said to John. 'We will drift up the river with the incoming tide; land some miles up, and spend the evening shooting among the valleys; light a fire and have supper up there; and then, when the tide has turned, we'll drift down again by moonlight!'

The programme worked itself out excellently—as long as the light lasted! We had an evening's excellent sport round the great lagoons along the upper reaches of the river, and up the thickly wooded valleys that had rarely or never before reverberated to the sound of a gun. We were congratulating our-

selves on the congested condition in which our larder must for some days luxuriate, when, with astounding suddenness, down came the rain! It was most provoking! It simply poured!

It was not merely that we were compelled to abandon all thought of the roaring fire and the savoury supper that had, all through the evening, teased our imaginations! That was bad enough in all conscience! But worse was to follow. For clearly, there would be no moonlight; and the task of negotiating the river, on a swiftly-running tide, in pitch darkness, and lashed by a pitiless rain, was sufficiently formidable to excite anxious thoughts; and we looked at each other gloomily.

As we made our way down-stream we could see nothing beyond the tips of the oars. The tide was running so rapidly that, to prevent being caught fast on a mudbank or dashed against the rocks, we had rather to resist than to row. Then came the problem. The river led straight on to the breakers! If, by any mischance, we passed the landing-place, no power on earth could save us from destruction. And how were we, in this black night, to make out the jetty? A dozen times we fancied we must be nearing it, drew in, found ourselves in difficulties, and pulled again into mid-stream. Then, all at once, we heard shrill coo-ees from the shore; and, on rounding a big black bluff, we saw, to our inexpressible relief, the twinkling of lanterns. Our wives had foreseen our peril and had come to guide us in!

Shall I ever forget the anxiety of that midnight row in the rain?

The danger of *floating past*!

The peril of *drifting by*!

But for the voices that called, and the lights that beckoned, we might so easily have floated past, might so easily have drifted by. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things of which we have heard lest haply *we float past them*!

VII

It is well to keep the anchor watch! Drifting is a dangerous business. Has not Captain Cook, the greatest of all our mariners, left a warning to that effect? A member of his party drifted out in an open boat near Fiji. For days and days he tossed hither and thither upon the waves, out of sight of all land. Then he would come close up to an island. He was too exhausted to attempt to swim, and, just as he was hoping that the boat would be flung ashore, it drifted out again. Day by day he recorded his terrible experiences in his notebook; and when, months afterwards, the boat was thrown up by the fickle waves, the tragic record was found beside the ghastly remains.

It is so easy for *the anchor to drag*!

It is so easy for *the ship to drift*!

It is so easy to *float past*!

I wonder if Stella had any inkling of this when she told her teacher that 'we ought to give the more

earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest haply we *drift away* from them!' She is very young, and I must excuse her if no such thoughts occurred to her. But there is no such excuse for her teacher—or for me!

IV

GOLDILOCKS

I

An ominous hush brooded over the Manse at Silverstream. Visitors crept to the door on tiptoe, made their inquiries, and stole silently away. Two or three times a day the rattle of wheels announced the return of the doctor's buggy. The soul of John Broadbanks was passing through deep waters. I was with him a good deal in those dreadful days, although it was not until some months afterwards that he told me the whole story. John and Lilian had been married for some years before the laughter of a little child awoke the echoes of the old Manse. Then, on the anniversary of his ordination, little Myrtle arrived—Goldilocks we called her. She was a roguish little puss, with bonny cheeks, eyes that twinkled slyly on the slightest provocation, a glorious shock of golden hair, and an infinite capacity for fun. I never saw such a romp; she was as lively and as tireless as a kitten. The dreamy old Manse fairly rocked when John and she were at their antics; and Lilian, pretending to scold, looked on proudly. It was natural that they should think the world of their treasure; but they were by no means alone in their baby-worship. Goldi-

locks quickly won the hearts of all the folk at Silverstream. After church or Sunday school the children were always pleased when Goldilocks appeared at the Manse door. The women found a new pleasure in calling upon Lilian; and even the elders—sunburnt farmers from across the Plain—carried from the Manse a sense of disappointment if, at the time of their visit, Goldilocks chanced to be asleep or away. They liked to see her peeping mischievously round the corner of the hall or riding in triumph on her father's shoulder. I myself was very frequently a guest at the Silverstream Manse and capitulated unconditionally to the spell of its tiny charmer.

And now Goldilocks was ill; she had been stricken down quite suddenly; and the doctor, whilst doing his utmost to serve and comfort them, could give but little hope. Lilian seldom emerged from the sickroom. When she did, her face was grave but calm and resolute. She was fighting, and fighting bravely, motherhood's eternal battle. The first war in the world was a desperate struggle between a furry mother in the forest and the prowling beast that had dared to flesh its cruel fangs in the tender body of her cub. In that agelong conflict every mother has at some time participated; and Lilian was maintaining the best traditions of the past. Poor John was helpless. Under such circumstances, a minister's lot is a peculiarly pitiable one. There is nothing that he can do; the inexpressible relief

of activity is denied him. Other men find solace, at least for a time, in their shops and offices; his office is at home. He enters his study, but he cannot give his mind to his books. It is a comfort when, after the doctor's visit, he is asked to harness the pony and drive off to the chemist for a prescription. During the illness of Goldilocks I visited Silverstream daily, and generally found John digging in the garden or pottering about in the stable. But this source of consolation failed him at sunset; and I could see that he was glad that I had come to spend the evening with him.

II

'John,' said Lilian one evening, 'do you know what has been running in my mind ever since Goldilocks took ill?'

The child had fallen into a troubled sleep, and, leaving the door ajar so that the slightest cry would reach her, Lilian had slipped for a moment from the room. She found John alone in the study.

'Well,' she continued, after receiving the inevitable negative, 'I keep thinking of the sermon you preached on the last Sunday I was at church. I heard it twice, for you went through the manuscript with me by the fireside on the Saturday night. It was one of your series on the Ten Commandments —the Second, wasn't it? It was all about idolatry, and about the Lord thy God being *a jealous God.* Do you remember? You cited an incident in the

life of Thomas Guthrie—where do you keep your manuscripts?'

'Oh, the manuscript's put away; and you'd hardly be able to make head or tail of it anyhow; but here's Guthrie!' And he took the book from the shelf and handed it to her opened at the marked passage.

Taking the volume from his hand, she read, in a trembling voice, the passage which had so impressed her on its previous recitals. *'If a god had died,'* says Guthrie, *'the terror and grief could hardly have exceeded that I once saw in the case of a mother who had set her affections too exclusively on the child we had met to carry to the grave. Seated at the head of the coffin, she seemed a statue, the grand work of some master hand, to represent the deepest, blackest grief. No tears were on her bloodless cheek. Fixed on the coffin, her eyes never left it. She neither moved nor spake; on her face one could read the words, "My heart is withered like grass." Absorbed in sorrow, it mattered as little to her as to the dead who went out or who came in. At length the moment came to remove the body. Then, as when the heavens that have been gathering blackness break out into a blaze of flame and roar of thunder, burst the storm. The form that had looked more like lifeless marble than one animate with life, now sprung up, threw itself on the coffin, clung to it with wails to pierce a heart of stone; and, when gentle force was employed to unloose her arms, she*

walked to the door—patting the poor coffin; and saw it borne out of her sight with an expression of agony, which, as she fell back fainting into the arms of kind neighbours, seemed to cry, "Ye have taken away my god, and what have I more?"' Closing the book, Lilian laid it on the table and resumed her own story.

'After the sermon that night, you remember, we sang Cowper's hymn:

> The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
> And worship only Thee.

It has been running in my mind ever since. For it was on the following Thursday, you know, that Goldilocks took ill. Do you think that *this* was the answer to the prayer in the hymn? Have we made an idol of her? Oh, John'—and Lilian buried her face on his shoulder—'I could not bear to have *her* torn from our hearts. Surely God is not angry with us for loving her too much!' And Lilian's overwrought nerves found relief in the fast flowing tears. She lingered for a moment with John's arm about her, and then hurried back to the sickroom.

III

John had not answered her. How could he? Truth to tell, some such thought had been running

through his own mind during those terrible and anxious days, although, singularly enough, he had not connected it with his sermon on the Second Commandment. Now, however, that Lilian had mentioned it, he turned up the manuscript. As he read it he could not shake off the conviction that it was certainly calculated to convey just such an impression as it had evidently left upon Lilian's mind. He had dealt with the sin of idolatry very trenchantly, and had shown that it can penetrate every aspect of human experience. One man, he had said, makes an idol of his money; another of his wife; a third of his child. The passage from Guthrie was only one of several similar illustrations. It had all seemed very convincing and effective at the time, and had created a profound impression; yet, somehow, it failed to satisfy him now. The main contention of the sermon seemed strangely harsh and incredible. He had laid great stress on the explanatory clause in the Commandment: *'For the Lord thy God is a jealous God.'* It seemed a strong argument *then*; but his soul revolted against it *now*. God jealous of Goldilocks! It was unthinkable! He felt ashamed of all that was implied in that immature sermon of his. Is God capable of looking with indignant and envious eyes upon a mother's fond affection for her firstborn? Could He be guilty of snatching her treasure from her arms and tossing it into a cold, cold grave, in order to compel her to lavish upon *Himself* the tenderness

that she had felt for her darling? And, if He perpetrated such an atrocity, would such a mother, dazed and heartbroken, be likely to yield her heart to such a Monster? To think that he, John Broadbanks, who had been solemnly ordained to preach to his people at Silverstream a gospel of divine and deathless love, had conveyed to their minds so hideous a conception of the Deity whose minister he aspired to be! It was enough to shadow with impenetrable gloom every homestead on the Plain!

And to think that, just when it was his duty, alike as her husband and as her minister, to sweeten and to fortify his wife's simple faith, he had cast such a cruel and bitter thought into her gentle heart! He felt like rushing to the sickroom and telling her that the sermon was false—as false as false could be! He felt like saddling 'Brownie' and riding off posthaste to every farm in the district to tell them the story of the Cross and to say that his ill-considered sermon was a lie!

Yet—was it?

Is not the Second Commandment directed against idolatry?

And is it not based on the emphatic declaration that '*the Lord thy God is a jealous God*'?

He had not lit the lamp. Glancing towards the window he saw that it was a radiant evening; the Plain was bathed in moonlight. He left the study, put on his hat, and set out along the road—to think.

IV

'A jealous God!'

'The Lord thy God is a jealous God!'

What did it mean? How did it affect his sermon? How did it affect his people? How did it affect Goldilocks—and Lilian—and himself? If Goldilocks died, would he regard her death as the answer to his chanted prayer? And, if so, how would it affect his faith?

A jealous God—jealous, perhaps, of Goldilocks! John found his mind running back over all the cases of jealousy of which he had ever heard or read. It was a curious medley, an unalluring panorama of human pique and passion. He did not like to think of God in this connexion. *'A jealous God!'* And yet, as he reviewed these cases in the silent night, he found them falling of their own accord into two distinct classes. There were cases that were absolutely contemptible and there were cases that were altogether admirable. There was the jealousy of Sydney Crittenden. Sydney contrived to make his home intolerable. Whenever his wife or daughters showed any marked attention to a visitor, a guest, or even to each other, he fancied that he had been dethroned and his place in their affections usurped. On such occasions he lapsed into a moody silence and made everybody in the house self-conscious and uncomfortable. Then, on the other hand, there was the jealousy of Eric Fairbairn. Eric was a simple,

openhearted, guileless fellow, by no means brilliant but transparently sincere. He had won the heart of Jeanie Duncan, and, to him, all the flowers seemed to be whispering her name. But then came the cloud. Jeanie became dazzled by the glamour of one more brilliant than himself. Rex Crawford had come from the city; he was visiting the district for health reasons; he could sing and play and paint and do a thousand things. He was pre-eminently a lady's man. His reputation was badly smudged, but Jeanie was too innocent to know anything of that; and Eric felt that, if he suggested it to her, his behaviour might easily be attributed to petty and selfish motives. And yet, as he saw Rex winning his way, and Jeanie falling more completely under his seductive spell, he could scarcely remain silent. He was jealous, furiously jealous. But he was also righteously and admirably jealous. For he knew that Rex had neither the power nor the desire to make Jeanie happy. She was his plaything; that was all. And, for Jeanie's sake, Eric resented it, and his heart was hot within him. John felt, as he reviewed the circumstances, that the jealousy of Eric Fairbairn was realy a noble thing.

Moreover, John had had a little secret experience of his own. It was in a Kentish village that John had wooed and won his wife. And, during the days of their courtship, her father had invited Tom Hedcroft, an Oxford undergraduate, the son of a very old friend, to spend his vacation at the home.

Lilian's mother was not strong, and it therefore fell to Lilian, as the only daughter, to do most of the entertaining. Several times, when John called, Lilian and Tom were out together. John was not exactly jealous; he had no valid ground for resentment; but, looking back upon it as he walked along the lonely roads in the moonlight, he remembered the delight that he felt when, left alone with Lilian, he found that her new friendship had not in the least affected her relationship with himself. Had there been the slightest coolness, the merest shadow of a change, he would have felt it like a knife in his heart; but she was as clinging, as open, and as fond as ever, and anything like jealousy was made impossible.

A rabbit shot across the road almost at his feet. It disturbed his reverie. Glancing around, he saw that he was halfway along the road to Mosgiel. He turned his face towards home. And, on the way back to the Manse, the memories that had come to him in the course of his walk wove themselves into the very tissue of his sermon on the Second Commandment. He felt that he should like to preach it again. 'I see now,' he said to himself, 'as I did not see then, what idolatry really is. I understand now what the Commandment means when it says that *the Lord is a jealous God*!' And, thinking thus, he came within sight of the lighted window of the room in which Goldilocks lay.

V

'Why, John,' exclaimed Lilian, as he entered, 'I couldn't think what had become of you!'

'I am sorry,' he replied. 'You set me thinking, you know, by what you said about my sermon. I hadn't been outside the gate all day, so I went for a stroll; and I was halfway to Mosgiel before I knew where I was. But I'm glad I went; I'm going to preach that sermon again one of these days!'

'Why?'

'Well, Lilian,' he replied, beginning, as was natural, with the thoughts that had come last and were therefore uppermost, 'I was thinking about the old days. Do you remember the time when Tom Hedcroft came to stay at your place?'

'Why, yes, you goose; but what on earth has that to do with it?'

'Well, you know, I was very nearly being jealous; but when I found that, after going for your excursions with Tom, you were just the same to me, it swept every speck of resentment from my heart. What did it matter to me if a thousand fellows from Oxford came to the house so long as you and I were sweethearts still?'

'But, John, what has that to do with it?'

'Well, Lilian, have we given God cause for jealousy? Has the coming of Goldilocks into our lives led us to love Him less—or *more*? For my part, I think that, since Goldilocks came, our hearts have

been softened and sweetened, and we have felt more thankful and trustful than ever. And if that is so, Lil, Goldilocks is no idol! She has not weaned us away from God; she has rather bound us more securely to Him.'

'Then, again,' he went on, 'I was thinking about Eric Fairbairn. You remember he got very jealous when Jeanie fell for awhile under the infatuation of Rex Crawford. But he was quite right in feeling as he did. He knew that Rex could do Jeanie nothing but harm.'

'But again, John, what has this to do with it?'

'Don't you see, Lil, that it helps a fellow to understand the jealousy of God. God isn't jealous of Goldilocks; He sees that our love for Goldilocks has done us nothing but good. Goldilocks is no idol. I see now, Lil, that an idol is a thing that, unable itself to help or bless the man who worships it, yet steals his affections from One who can. When our love for other things is like Jeanie's stupid fancy for Rex Crawford, God is jealous, as He has a right to be. He cannot bear us to love those things that, undermining our affection for Himself, will at last bring us nothing but disillusion and disgust. Lil,' he continued, abruptly changing the subject, 'we couldn't have Family Worship this morning; but suppose we pray now?' They knelt at the one chair.

'O Merciful Father,' he cried, 'we still ask Thee to tear from our hearts the dearest idol that dares to rival Thee. But, if it may be, restore to us the

treasure Thou hast confided to our care, and, in loving her, help us more lovingly to serve Thee.'

They rose and entered the sickroom together. He stood upon one side of the bed and she upon the other. He stooped and, brushing back the curls, kissed the forehead of the sleeping child.

This all happened twenty years ago. The New Zealand mail has just brought me a full account of the wedding of Goldilocks; and I was particularly interested in the report of the speech in which John, at the breakfast, testified to the sunshine which, for more than twenty years, the bride had scattered about the Manse.

V

MR. AND MRS. THOUGHTLESS

Poor, dear Mr. Thoughtless! He is such a particularly nice fellow. So amiable is he, so genial and so kind-hearted, that it seems positively cruel to say a single harsh word concerning him. But I must nerve myself for the trying ordeal and set down a few strong sentences whilst I feel in the humour. If I hesitate, his siren smile will seduce me, and his soft voice will make me falter in the path of duty. I must write at once or I shall never write at all.

I am angry with Mr. Thoughtless—righteously angry. I have just seen him. I was returning from a visit which I paid, immediately after tea, to a sick girl who lives near the station. In crossing Hamilton Square, I saw, near the fountain, two gentlemen approaching me, and had no difficulty in recognizing Mr. Thoughtless and his partner. They were evidently hurrying to the train, so I did not stop. As they passed, Mr. Thoughtless removed his cigar, waved his hand, and bestowed upon me a genial smile and a cheerful jest. As I watched his vanishing form I suddenly remembered that he had undertaken to address the Girls' Literary Circle this very evening, and here he was bustling off to the train! Do you wonder at my wrath? When he makes ap-

pointments which he fails to keep; when he gives us promises which he never redeems; when he absents himself, as he so often does, from his appointed post, I feel vexed as I feel vexed now; yet, to my own disgust, I soon get over it. Mr. Thoughtless apologises so profusely, is so full of explanations, is so sincerely anxious to be good and to do good, that it is extremely difficult to scold him. His smile disarms you. His cordiality slays the nearly-uttered rebuke just as it is about to leap from your lips. He is such a very nice fellow. Poor Mr. Thoughtless!

Why, dear me, would you believe it? Even as I sit at my desk, the very thought of his bland face and enthusiastic tones has almost shamed my wrath and turned me from my purpose. But in this instance his offence does not primarily concern myself. I have young people to look after; and I dare not sacrifice their highest interests to the empty-headed caprice of silly Mr. Thoughtless. So I intend to expose him. I have excellent warrant for the course I am taking. Paul closes his very last letter by publishing the name of a wrongdoer. 'Alexander, the coppersmith,' he says, 'did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works!' I was never honoured with the coppersmith's acquaintance, so that I cannot quite share the Apostle's feelings at that point; but strike out the name of Alexander and insert the name of poor, silly Mr. Thoughtless, and you have my own case precisely. 'Mr. Thought-

less, dear, well-meaning man, has done me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works!' And let all the people say Amen!

There is nothing like a good story for restoring one's mental equilibrium. In writing of Mr. Thoughtless I wish to avoid both extremes—the extreme of heated indignation (to which I am tempted by his sins) and the extreme of easy-going tolerance (to which I am tempted by his smiles). So, in order to bring my mind to a fine judicial poise, let me repeat a couple of excellent stories. Both are from real life. The one is told by a famous British Ambassador and the other by a scarcely less famous City Missionary. Sir Edward Baldwin Malet was one of Queen Victoria's most trusted diplomats and plenipotentiaries. He represented Great Britain successively at Pekin, Athens, Constantinople, Brussels, and Berlin, and was subsequently made a Privy Councillor. In his book, which he has appropriately entitled *Shifting Scenes,* he has given us some of his foreign experiences, and this is one of them. He was visiting Milan, he tells us. As soon as he arrived in the Italian city, he drove to an hotel, and then, eager to see the sights, he sallied forth, leaving his portmanteau yawning, his dressing-case ajar, and money lying loose upon the table. 'I thought of nothing,' he says, 'save that I was once more in Italy. Still, I locked the door and took the key with me. When I came back, an aged and shrivelled housemaid followed me into

my room. She was wringing her hands. "Ah, mio signore!" cried she, going up to the dressing table and opening a little drawer, "is this yours?" In the drawer lay ten or a dozen gold pieces. "Yes," I said, "they are mine." "Ah, signore, how could you do it? How could you leave this money about? It was all lying on the table." "Why, I locked my door. I knew it was safe." "No," she cried, "it was not safe! It was cruel to put such temptation in my way!" She sank upon a chair and burst into tears. "Think of me, signore. I am very poor. I have six children to keep and a husband who can do no work. The money would make me rich, and you leave it on the table, the gold pieces all loose to dazzle my eyes and to put the devil into my heart! Through your thoughtlessness I might go to jail, my children might starve, my husband die. Ah, signore mio, never do it again! Think of the poor. Be merciful to us. Do not put temptation in our way!" ' That is the first of the two stories that I wish to submit to the consideration of Mr. Thoughtless.

The second, I promised, should be told by a City Missionary. It really concerns *Mrs.* Thoughtless, but that is neither here nor there. Mr. Thomas Holmes is the most famous Police Court Missionary of our time; and his books rank as classics. In his *Pictures and Problems from London Police Courts,* Mr. Holmes tells of a woman, about thirty-six years of age, who was charged with being drunk. Her head was bandaged, and her mantle, which had seen

much better days, was covered with blood. Having fallen from a tram-car, she had been picked up insensible and smelling of drink. The constable took her to the station. The doctor was sent for, and, after attending to her injuries, he certified that she was recovering from the effects of drink. Mr. Holmes interested himself in the case. He visited the home. A beautiful and neatly-dressed girl of about sixteen opened the door. The only other resident was an aunt, old and wrinkled, bent with age and trouble. There was every sign of straitened circumstances, but also of undoubted respectability. Mr. Holmes was convinced that a mistake had been made, and he probed the matter to its very roots. And this is what he unearthed. 'I found,' he says, 'that this poor woman had taken home some finished work to a lady, who praised it and gave her further work to do. Unfortunately, she did not think of paying her; and, more unfortunately still, she gave her a glass of spirits. Doubtless it was kindly meant, but it was disastrous; for the woman was weak from want of proper nourishment, and in just that condition of body and mind when some food would have been most useful. Having to return home on the tram, and the inside of the car being full, she had to mount the outside. Just as she got to the top, and before she could get a seat, the car started, and overboard she went. The spirits had doubtless made her a little giddy, but she told me that she would not have fallen but

for the car starting too soon.' And there she lies in the police cell—convicted of drunkenness! Oh, Mrs. Thoughtless! Mrs. Thoughtless! *'Doubtless it was kindly meant,'* says Mr. Holmes. Of course it was; everything that Mr. and Mrs. Thoughtless do is kindly meant. They are such delightful, such amiable people; you can't help liking them. But, for all that, they multiply the sorrows of a world that has sorrow enough already.

I remember—can, indeed, never forget—a night in my very early ministerial experience when my soul almost died within me. There came a ring at the front-door bell. I was wanted in the study. In the study whom should I find but a young man and maiden with whom I was on the most intimate terms. But to-night their usual merriment had given place to misery. *His* face was white and drawn and his eyes downcast. *She* burst into tears as I entered the room. I soon grasped the position and shared the burden of their wretchedness. It was the first great crushing sorrow that, as a minister, I was called to endure. I was staggered, bewildered, almost heart-broken. But, when I had recovered from the first stunning shock, I reflected that I had other young people to think of. Might I not learn something from the depths of this bitter experience by which I might save some who would in days to come be threatened with similar disaster? I had further interviews with the young couple who sat in my study that night. I sought to help them in

every way possible; and my sympathy encouraged their confidence. And then I heard a tale of parental carelessness that has put a ring of passion into my voice whenever I have since had occasion to emphasize the sanctities of home life. I need scarcely say that the bride I married in tears a day or so later was the daughter of Mr. Thoughtless. He was very fond of her, almost spoiled her; yet his utter lack of guardianship and prudence had practically thrown her away. She survived the shame of that clouded wedding. Chastened by anguish and penitence, she lived to win the perfect confidence and affectionate admiration of all who knew her; but I, for my part, never forgave Mr. Thoughtless his criminal carelessness. Had he given the matter the smallest consideration he might so easily have saved these young folk from shipwreck.

He is just the same in business. There was a very ugly little scandal in his office some time ago. Money was taken, and, of course, nothing can justify a theft. But, when I came to know all the particulars, I could see quite clearly that Mr. Thoughtless himself was not entirely guiltless. Good, easy man, he means well. He himself would not dream of robbing anybody; and it never occurs to him that the young fellows about the office may sometimes find themselves in circumstances that tempt them to rob him. Money was left about quite needlessly; many of the office arrangements are of the most go-as-you-please type, and peculation was

rendered perilously easy. A youth found himself in temporary financial difficulty; the sight of silver lying about the office suggested ideas that would otherwise never have occurred to him. The money that he needed was so near; the chances of discovery so remote; and, before he had considered the risk that he ran, the evil deed was done. It was inexcusable, I repeat; but, if Mr. Thoughtless had only exercised a little imagination and a little common sense and a little forethought, the tragedy might so easily have been prevented.

This sort of thing is fairly common. I was riding in a railway train some time ago. Opposite me sat two men. I gathered from their conversation that they were policemen in private clothes. Presently there entered the carriage a tall young lady, rather overdressed. She was smothered in trinkets and finery, including a dainty little gold watch suspended by a still more dainty gold chain. 'That's the sort of thing that gets us work,' I heard one of the constables say to the other; 'some poor wretch will make a grab at that watch one of these days, and who'll be to blame?' Who indeed? The young lady was a relative of Mr. Thoughtless, I feel sure; and next time she calls on him I should like him to discuss the policeman's question with her. A vain young lady, just for the look of the thing, wears a costly watch suspended by a gossamer of gold; a hungry wretch at the street corner is suddenly infatuated by the possibilities that it opens up to him.

He makes the snatch. She loses her trinket and he loses his honour. Who's to blame, Mr. Thoughtless, who's to blame? Answer the policeman's question. *Who's to blame?*

. . . . . .

P.S.—It is one of life's luxuries to be able, five years after penning the foregoing protest, to strike a gentler note in referring to Mr. and Mrs. Thoughtless. I am not altogether without hope of them. Warned by the painful experience that darkened their household in connexion with their daughter's hasty marriage, they set themselves to introduce a more helpful atmosphere into the home. Among other things, they established family worship. The other morning Mr. Thoughtless was reading aloud from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

'*Let us consider one another,*' he read, and then paused as though something had occurred to him. He repeated the words and read on.

'Why did you pause in your reading this morning, George?' Mrs. Thoughtless asked him that night when they had the room all to themselves.

'It was only the words I had just read—'*Let us consider one another.*' It occurred to me that, if we had only considered, we might have saved Edward and Kate from all their unhappiness. And I was thinking about young Harry down at the office. It may have been partly my fault for putting temptation in his way. Somehow, it all came home to me this morning when I read the words aloud!'

'Consider!'

'Let us consider!'

'Let us consider one another!'

So read Mr. Thoughtless. And, when he read those words, Mr. Thoughtless thought. Thought is infectious. When *Mr.* Thoughtless thought, *Mrs.* Thoughtless thought also. And since Mr. and Mrs. Thoughtless thought, Mr. and Mrs. Thoughtless have scarcely seemed the same people.

VI

'THIS IS THE DAY!'

I

At first I thought it was just scribbled on the window with a fluid of some kind, but I soon discovered that it was cut in the glass with a stone. It was in my college days. I had been asked to conduct the anniversary services at a village chapel in Sussex. I arrived by train on the Saturday afternoon, and was met by a young farmer—the secretary of the Sunday school—and driven to the cottage at which I was to stay. It was a quaint old place, smothered by a tangle of creepers, and its sole occupant was Old Bessie, the widow of a former minister. She was a most lovable hostess. When I retired at night I saw at once that I had been given the room that she usually occupied. Everything was spotlessly clean and as cosy as could be. I slept like a top; and it was when I rose in the morning that I made the discovery of which I have already told. It was a perfect June morning. I sprang from the bed to pull up the blind and throw open the window. I had done the former, and was about to do the latter,

when I noticed the mark on the glass. It was just this:

At first, as I say, I thought it was just scrawled with a fluid of some kind; but I soon found on examination that it was cut right into the glass. I determined to ask Old Bessie about it at breakfast.

II

'Everybody asks about that!' she said with a laugh, as soon as I broached the subject. 'I never thought when I wrote it there that it would lead to so many questions. But, you see, I have had a lot of trouble in my time, and I am a great one to worry. I was always afraid of what was going to happen to-morrow. And each morning when I woke up I felt as though I had the weight of the world upon me. Then, one day, when I was very upset about things, I sat down, and read my Bible. It was *his* Bible once,' she said reflectively, glancing at a photograph of her late husband. 'It happened that I was reading the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm. When I came to the twenty-fourth verse, I stopped. *"This is the day that the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it."* I looked again to see what particular day was referred to.

But I could not find it. And then it occurred to me that it means any day, every day—this day! *"This is the day* that the Lord hath made." And why should I be afraid of the days if He makes them? It flashed upon me like a burst of sunshine on a gloomy day. I happened to notice that Tom, who is apprenticed to a glazier, had left his tools in the kitchen. I snatched up his diamond, ran upstairs, and scrawled the words as well as I could on the windowpane.'

'There!' I thought, 'now I shall see that little bit of Bible there every morning when I draw up the blind, and I will say to myself, *"This* is the day! *This* is the day! *This is the day that the Lord hath made!"*'

'And many a time since, when things were looking black, I have been glad that I did it. Somehow, you don't feel afraid of the day if you feel that *He made it*!'

Old Bessie's curious experience set me thinking.

III

I fancy that Bessie has helped me to understand the text as I could never otherwise have done. The lover delights in the possession of any trifle that is the workmanship of that deft hand that he deems it heaven to call his own. 'This is the gift that her hands have made: I will rejoice and be glad in it.' It is this tender and beautiful sentiment that the inspired minstrel lifts to the loftiest level. He who

sincerely loves the person of the Creator will revel in the most insignificant of His creations. Each flower that blooms and each bird that sings will charm him, not only in virtue of its own intrinsic worth, but because it is the workmanship of a hand that he adores. 'The sea is His and He made it,' he will say to himself, as he strolls along the sands. 'This is the sea that the Lord hath made: I will rejoice and be glad in it.' The solitudes of the bush will be instinct with a mystic grandeur. 'These are the trees that the Lord hath made: I will rejoice and be glad in them.' The garden beneath his window will have for such a man an ampler glory. 'This is the rose that the Lord hath made: I will rejoice and be glad in it.'

When Dante, standing with Virgil and Statius in the gloomy forest, saw Matilda across the intervening stream, she was gathering wild flowers in the sunlit fields and singing to herself the most enchanting strains. Dante called to her and asked of what she was singing. Matilda answered that she was singing for very joy at the loveliness of the Divine handiwork. 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work,' she chanted, 'I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.' Be the hands human, or be the hands divine, it is equally true that the heart that loves those hands will find an added charm in all the things that those fingers fashion.

IV

God is a God of infinite variety. He never makes two leaves in precisely the same mould. He never builds two petals on exactly the same plan. He does not make a single feather the duplicate of any other. His work is marked by the most amazing originality. Only Deity is capable of such inexhaustible ingenuity. And, just because He scorns to repeat Himself, He never makes two days exactly alike. The cloud effects of the sunrise are like the mosaics of the kaleidoscope—they are never the same twice over. Each day is a new poem, not a revised version of an earlier one. The print of His fingers is on every dawn. Since this little world first span in space, there has never come a day of which you could not sing, 'This is the day! *This is the day* that the Lord hath made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.' And there never can come one. The making of days is a divine monopoly. And just because each day as it comes will be a day of His making, no man need be afraid of his to-morrows. Of each day it will be true that *'this is the day!'* He made it. What He makes, He makes well. Whatever He creates He looks upon and sees that it is very good. I may go to bed to-night and sleep as sweetly as a tired child. His fingers are fashioning my to-morrow. And when the morning comes I may pull up the blinds with a brave heart and sing with Old Bessie this matin-song, 'This is

the day! *This is the day* that the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.' It is a message for all my mornings.

V

Nobody but God would dare to make a day, even if he knew how. Think of the stupendous drama represented by a single day's experience—its thunder of laughter and its oceans of tears, its madcap merriment and its heart-breaking miseries, its new exhibition of human goodness and gentleness and chivalry, its sinister revelation of human hatred and bitterness and shame! Then ask yourself: Would I, if I had the power, take the responsibility of drawing the curtains of another dawn, of opening the gates of another day? Would I dare to plunge the world into such a quagmire of terrific possibilities? Unless I felt that I was strong enough to keep a firm controlling and restraining hand on the day that I was making, I should be afraid to create even the sunniest day. I should tremble lest the day that I had made should be a day of uttermost disaster, a day of darkness unillumined by the shining of any kindly light, a day of cruelty unrelieved by any compensating nobleness, a day of shame and wretchedness and scalding tears. I should be afraid lest, on the day that I had made, all the song should be hushed into silence and be succeeded by a universal scream.

God dares to manufacture days because He

knows that He is mighty enough to control them with a firm unwavering hand. And, that being so, Old Bessie and I need never be dismayed. Since He makes the day, the good must immeasurably outweigh the ill, the love must be incalculably greater than the hate, the smiles must be far more numerous than the tears. Even the tears are but part of the intricate process by which He prepares the smiles of a day that is yet in the making. He does not make days that He cannot control. He does not make days that are not worth making. If He fashions one day to be a day of anguish and of travail, it is only that the next may be a day of glorious birth. When He makes His days, He leaves nothing to chance. There is, about each of His new days, the witchery of the unexplored. It inflames my curiosity. It appeals to my sense of the undiscovered. It is a packet of surprises. It comes, grey and unpretentious, but it invariably brings its own thrills and sensations and astonishments. It is a slice of infinity. It tingles with the unexpected. And so it will be to the last.

VI

Yes, to the last! Old Bessie and I do not like to think of last days, and it is natural that we should shrink from them. God has not made those days yet. My business is to cultivate the acquaintance of the day to which I was introduced this morning, and to discover how amiable and lovable and good

it is. I have heard of love at first sight. I have never heard of love *before* sight. How can I expect to love a day that I have never seen? But, depend upon it, when He makes that last day of mine, He will make it well; and, as is invariably the case, it will be a very different day from the day that my terrors have painted for me. In 1745 Louis Rang and Jacques Roger mounted the scaffold at Grenoble, singing as they ascended the steps Old Bessie's song, 'This is the day! *This is the day that the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it!*' If you had told them five years earlier that on that last dawn they would rejoice to discover the imprint of His fingers, they would both have accounted it a thing incredible. And even of the Day of Judgment the same will hold true. It would be the nightmare of the ages if *that day* were being fashioned by any hands but His. But since, when that day comes, the print of His fingers will be upon its dawn, we may be sure that its proceedings will appeal to every man's reason and to every man's conscience. Justice and judgment will be the habitation of His throne and we shall still sing the old song, 'This is the day! *This is the day that the Lord hath made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.*' That is what Old Bessie taught me, and it is worth learning.

VII

A LION IN CURLPAPERS

A lion in curlpapers! The phrase is not mine; I wish it were. It is one of Tennyson's. In the course of a famous controversy, the poet once denounced Bulwer Lytton as *a lion in curlpapers*! I shall not revive the circumstances that elicited the outburst; let bygones be bygones! But the epithet deserves immortality because it contains both a splendid compliment and a scathing criticism. Bulwer Lytton is *a lion;* could anything be more regal? Bulwer Lytton is *a lion in curlpapers;* could anything be more ridiculous? There are some things that are best just as they are. A dog looks scarcely respectable without a collar, and a kitten is greatly improved by a bit of blue ribbon with a little silver bell. But a lion needs no frills. Take him as he is and you have him at his best; put him in curlpapers and you make him a spectacle for men and angels.

Yet, strange to say, this queer old world of ours has betrayed an inveterate propensity for putting lions into curlpapers. I suppose it requires a certain amount of moral courage to exhibit the lion in his natural state, and so the stupid showman must needs trick out the poor brute in fantastic fripperies

that only destroy his grandeur and lay his glory in the dust. Take the historian by way of example. If any man on earth has lions to show, the historian is that happy man. It is his supreme business in life to exhibit lions. The lions of every age; the lions of all countries; the lions of each department of human activity; the historian leads them out one by one. He displays their points and proudly invites our admiration. But the admiration is generally a very half-hearted affair; and for a sufficient reason. For the showman will insist on getting up his lions in curlpapers. He is afraid to present them just as they are. Lord Macaulay once wrote a fine essay of nearly thirty pages to protest against this preposterous timidity. Why, he demands, cannot our historians tell their great tales simply, naturally, vividly, without any frills or flourishes? Why can they not tell them as a little child would tell them in the nursery or as a footman would tell them in the servants' kitchen? If, he says, they adopted such a style, the circulating libraries would be mobbed, the book-rooms would be in a ferment of commotion, the latest novel would lie uncut, and the magazines and newspapers would be packed with extracts. Men would see the lions *in puris naturalibus,* and all the world would thunder its approbation. 'As it is,' he sighed, sadly, 'histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.' And why? Because the style is stilted and smacks of artificiality. The lions

are all in curlpapers! Let every man who has a tale to tell, whether through the medium of the pulpit, the platform or the press, take careful heed. Lions need no curlpapers—are, indeed, far more imposing without them.

Now this raises a great question. For the curlpapers represent, I suppose, the conventions of life, and the conventions are not to be lightly disregarded. I owe something to society, and I owe something to myself. I owe it to society not to needlessly defy its standards or outrage its tastes; and I owe it to myself not to needlessly make myself appear singular, fantastic or odd. I may fancy that an Indian turban is more becoming than a felt hat; I may think that Syrian sandals are infinitely preferable to leather boots; or I may hold the opinion that, to match the trees, an umbrella should be of a bright green hue. But Society is against me. Society believes that I should wear a hat rather than a turban, that I should keep to boots instead of open sandals; and that my umbrella should be a sombre black. Now it is clear to me that, in matters of this kind, I must humbly bow to the judgment of society. If, on such points, I willfully flout the will of society, society is offended with me, and my influence is deprived of its constituency. And if, over a mere trifle, I gain a reputation for oddity, my influence straightway loses its driving-power. Everything that I do or say is set down as the action or the utterance of a crank. I cannot afford it. I may gain my white turban, my

open sandals or my green umbrella; but I lose everything that I most value. On the whole it is better for me to conciliate society by adopting a felt hat, a pair of boots, and a black umbrella, and to leave society under the pleasing illusion that I possess a sound mind and a level head.

But to this rule there are obvious limits. Mrs. Grundy must not impose on my good nature; she must not ask too much of me. She must, indeed, learn to be consistent. When I propose to affect a white turban, Syrian sandals, and a green umbrella, Mrs. Grundy tells me that I should be making myself ridiculous. I therefore abandon the idea. But if, after that, Mrs. Grundy herself proposes that I should be made grotesque, I shall firmly and politely decline. I am not prepared, even to please her, to become *a lion in curlpapers*!

There is nothing on earth as leonine as Man, not even the lion. Man out-lions the lion at every turn. He is more brave than the lion; he will dare anything. He is more ferocious than the lion; you have but to rouse him and he will shake the planet with the awful din of his hideous and murderous warfare. He is, as Hamlet declared, "the paragon of animals." 'What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and movement, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!' The beauty of the world is he, the paragon of animals. And yet, as Hamlet himself implies in

the words that immediately follow, Man is not altogether satisfactory. To return to our comparison, he is not as satisfactory as a lion. 'The average lion,' as Professor A. W. Momerie points out, 'is a type of lionhood; but where will you find the man who is a type of manhood!' If I go to the Zoo, the lion strikes me at once as being all that a lion should be; yet, of the hundreds of men walking about the gardens, not one strikes me as being all that a man should be. How are we to account for this peculiarity? Is it not largely a matter of curlpapers? Like a fly in a cobweb, Man has become entangled in a perfect network of artificialities and affectations. He is continually victimised by custom, habit and precedent. He is a child of fashion. He feels that he must do as everybody does. And so, whilst the lionhood of the lion remains intact, the manhood of the man becomes modified, standardised and generally toned down.

Have we not seen the lion in curlpapers in public life? John Templeton was a capital fellow, greatly gifted, and everybody esteemed him. His brilliant advocacy of excellent causes won for him a deep and universal respect. His fearless denunciations of social evils and public iniquities were marked by evident passion, yet by commendable restraint. He stood for Parliament and was returned at the head of the poll. Our pride and delight in his triumph knew no bounds. But from that time forth there came over him a change which it is

difficult to describe and impossible to explain. It may be that, burdened with actual legislative responsibility, he found that it was easier to dream youthful dreams than to translate them into the phraseology of the Statute Book. But, however that may be, it seemed to all his old admirers that he never again spoke with the same air of confidence and conviction. Unlike Browning's wise thrush, 'he never could recapture his first fine careless rapture.' He seemed strangely reluctant to say or do anything that might not be generally agreeable. On many vital subjects he was tongue-tied. As a matter of fact, a perpetuation of his earlier enthusiasm would have appealed to the truest instincts even of those who differed from him. But he never seemed to grasp this. And as I contrasted the earlier with the later John Templeton, it was like contrasting a lion in an African forest with *a lion in curlpapers!*

And yet the case of John Templeton was not quite as lamentable as that of Claude Burleigh. Ten years ago Claude swept everything before him by his spiritual intensity and passion. He was a young fellow of great ability, of gentle disposition, and of commanding influence and authority. He was dux of the Grafton House School; captain of the cricket team; and the idol of all his companions. When he joined the church he threw himself with enthusiasm into all its activities. After awhile he began to preach, and his audiences were moved

by his fine prophetic fervour. One could imagine that the youthful Isaiah was just such a figure as he. People thronged to hear him and were deeply moved by his appeals. We all felt that the ministry would be immensely enriched if Claude could be induced to enter its ranks. To our delight he turned his face that way, and, in due time, went to college. After a year or so, I noticed that Claude was getting scrupulously accurate in his clerical attire. I detected—and this gave me still greater concern—the faintest suspicion of affectation in his voice. The old prophetic ring was gone: the passion had died down. When Claude left college, he did everything that a minister could be expected to do; and did it in the most precise ministerial fashion. He was

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
> Dead perfection, no more.

I heard him, on the second Sunday after his settlement, preach a very thoughtful and very excellent sermon: I would not presume to criticize it. But I thought, a little sadly, of the old Claude—the Claude who used to stir our consciences and move our hearts. I felt that we had lost, not the lion, but the leonine. Claude had become *a lion in curlpapers.*

The pity of it is that it need not have been so and ought not to have been so. Claude did not enter college to have something taken from him but to

have something added to him. The college should have been to him a means of grace. It was designed not to destroy, but to direct, his leonine strength and spirit. But poor Claude lost his head. He concentrated all his thought upon the curlpapers. And, to gain them, he sacrificed everything that was leonine in his character.

It is really a problem in mathematics, and a very subtle problem at that. A lion in curlpapers is a lion—*and something more.* But the *addition* is really a *subtraction.* The lion with the curlpapers is much less effective than the lion without the curlpapers. The lion without the curlpapers was leonine; the lion with the curlpapers is ludicrous. As the ages have come and gone we have added very considerably to the Church as it was. Have the additions been a real gain, or have they been merely a matter of curlpapers? I recall a striking sentence or two by Emile Faquet, the eminent French littérateur. He declares that 'every party loses in strength what it gains in size, and gains in size only at the cost of losing strength. Christians were not altogether true Christians after they numbered more than twelve.' The additions, that is to say, were simply a matter of tittivating the lion with curlpapers. The Church may become, like Sir Leicester Dedlock's famous family, 'as old as the hills and infinitely more respectable' without making any real advance on her pristine majesty and power. Additions may so easily be subtractions. In writing

his last letter, Peter taught his scattered and persecuted converts that the Christian life is essentially a matter of *addition*. *'Add,'* he says, *'add* to your faith virtue; and *add* to your virtue knowledge; and *add* to your knowledge temperance; and *add* to your temperance patience; and *add* to your patience godliness; and *add* to your godliness kindness; and *add* to your kindness love.' Here is *addition* for you! But when I look back on the faith with which I began, I wonder if I have added to it anything but a flutter of curlpapers.

PART II

I

THE OLD FOLKS AT HOME

BLESSED be the divine ingenuity that invented grandfathers and grandmothers! The influence of grandfatherism and grandmotherism is peculiar to humanity. In the vegetable world, the bursting buds of spring push off the last lingering leaves of the previous season, and thus decline to have anything to do with the generation that preceded them, to say nothing of the generation before that. Among animals and birds a certain filial affection is sometimes found for fathers and mothers; but of grandfathers and grandmothers never a trace. But a man is so much greater than either a tree or a beast that a special factor is introduced into his training. He comes under the influence not only of teachers and tutors, of fathers and mothers, but of grandfathers and grandmothers as well. And who shall say that the world is not immensely richer in consequence? Has not Lord Rosebery told us that it is impossible to understand the two Pitts until you have made the acquaintance of old Governor Pitt—the elder Pitt's grandfather—whose fiery blood descended, 'like burning lava,' to our two great British statesmen? Grandfatherism gives every man a second chance. If his parents fail

him, his grandparents may yet prove his salvation. Hezekiah was about the best of the Old Testament kings; but he was the son of Ahaz, who was about the worst. But he had a grandfather, Jotham, who 'did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,' and on his grandfather's example Hezekiah modelled his own behaviour. Therein lies the glory of grandfatherism!

I remember very well my own grandfather. Every morning towards eleven o'clock there was a firm step in the hall, and in he walked, tall, stately, and grey. Winter and summer, as far as I can remember, he never missed. He always had something fresh to say, and each visit had a charm of its own. Of course I was usually at school when he called; but one of the pleasures of the holidays was to be at home with mother when grandfather dropped in. Year in and year out, he always came. My memory does not portray him to me as looking any younger when I was a child, or any older when I became a man; he seemed somehow to be perennially the same. I distinctly remember being told that grandfather was once a little boy like me. I could not deny it, because I had no evidence with which to refute so ludicrous an affirmation. But I did not believe it; and I entertained from that moment less respect for the person who attempted in this way to trade upon my childish credulity. I thought about it a good deal in secret, especially in bed at night, and eventually accepted the theory as

a tentative hypothesis; but it was many years before it got farther than that.

Then there were my visits to grandfather. There was always a certain indefinable element of romance in staying with him. There was the big bedroom with the high ceiling and the strange pictures on the wall; there was the basement kitchen in which grandfather had breakfast; and there was the orchard! Oh, the wild romance of that orchard; it was a prairie and a jungle all rolled into one! 'What a deliciously sweet place grandmamma's orchard is!' cried young Charles Lamb ecstatically; and I can sympathize with his enthusiasm. Then, too, grandfather kept a parrot that talked; and he kept rabbits; and, best of all, he kept a lovely chestnut pony. But here again a spice of mystery attended my relationship to grandfather. It always seemed to me that my visits to him were oddly timed. I should have preferred that those visits had always been paid in summer, during the long holidays, when I might go for rides and drives with Dobbin every day. But only one of those visits took place under such ideal conditions. The rest for some inscrutable reason were scattered over all the seasons of the year; and, to my intense disgust, I had to go to school as usual. But the real mystery attaching to those visits lay in the bewildering coincidence that, when I returned to my own home, there was invariably a new baby there. I could never make out why those babies were so manifestly terrified at me.

Why were they so afraid to come when I was at home? Why did they come sneaking into the house as soon as my back was turned? I was the eldest of ten; and I confess that my filial regard for my younger brothers was somewhat prejudiced at the very early outset by their absurd timidity in this respect. But all these things only intensified the emotions with which I invariably gazed upon the person of my grandfather. A constant halo of wonder and romance seemed to encircle his furrowed brow.

I can readily understand, therefore, that other grandfathers may have impressed their grandchildren in pretty much the same way. And grandmothers, too. Indeed, some people would argue that we owe more to our grandmothers than to our grandfathers. I have just been reading the story of the childhood of Maxim Gorki. It is a grim and terrible tale. Gorki's father died whilst he was still a baby. His mother took her babe and returned to the home of her parents. But the old man gave the widowed daughter and her fatherless bairn a chilling reception. Every day the wrath of the stern old Russian broke upon the head of the frail, imaginative boy with the force of a thunderstorm. He was terrified; and his mother was powerless to protect him. Through all those dark and fearful days, his grandmother—a gracious and gentle old body—was his guardian angel. How he adored that grandmother of his! In his own account of that gloomy

phase of his experience he gives us this gem: 'Grandfather,' he says, 'used to take me to church—to vespers on Saturdays and to High Mass on Sundays and festivals—but even in church I made a distinction as to which God was being addressed; whatever the priest or deacon recited—that was grandfather's God; but the choir always sang to grandmother's God.' The old man's God filled the child with terror; He was harsh and merciless. 'But grandmother's God was the dear Friend of all creation.' And speaking of grandmothers, what would Basil have been without his grandmother, Macrina? The old lady had suffered, and suffered heavily, for her faith; and as the young disciple sat at his grandmother's feet his sense of the heroic and of the holy were simultaneously awakened.

The Bible has done a good deal to foster and perpetuate this tenderest sentiment. The beauty of the revelation that came to Jacob when he saw the ladder of light, with the angels ascending and descending upon it, is that the Lord, the Lord God, stood beside the staircase saying to him: 'I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac'—the God of thy father and thy grandfather; *am I to be thy God also*? It is a great day in a man's life when he discovers that he must have a religion of his own. Shall he take his father's God and his grandfather's God to be his God? Shall it be the God of Abraham and Isaac—*and Jacob*? Then again, in the Old Testament there is a grandfather, and in the New Testa-

ment there is a grandmother, both of whom have appealed in a most marked way to this reverential awe within us. I refer, of course, to Benaiah's grandfather, and to Timothy's grandmother. Benaiah, it will be remembered, was one of David's three mighty men. 'Benaiah,' we are told, 'did many mighty acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day; and he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high, and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.' But the striking thing about this heroic record is not the list of Benaiah's doughty deeds; but the description of Benaiah himself. It was 'Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, *the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel,*' who did these things. Of the father, be it noted, nothing is said. It is the valour of the grandfather that is emphasized. One can see young Benaiah sitting at his grandsire's feet, whilst the old man told of the exploits of his youth. Like Goldsmith's 'broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,' the old man

> Sat by his fire, and talked the night away;
> Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
> Shoulder'd his crutch, and showed how fields were won.

And thus to the inspiring and stimulating influence of this old Hebrew grandfather, we owe one of the

most stirring and chivalrous records in Old Testament story.

The grandmother in the New Testament to whom I have referred, is, of course, Lois, the grandmother of Timothy. Paul speaks of Faith as though she were a pilgrim passing from house to house along the road, dwelling with all who would open their doors to show her hospitality. 'I call to remembrance,' he says, 'the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother, Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and, I am persuaded, in thee also.' It is a pretty picture. 'Many,' says Dr. Alexander Whyte, 'many were the delightful Sabbath hours that Lois his grandmother spent with Timothy her dawning grandson, over Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and Solomon. Then, as he grew in wisdom, she would show him how all those great men of his mother's and his grandmother's Scriptures became wise unto salvation. As also, where they became foolish, and risked their salvation. Especially Solomon, who was in everything, but in his salvation, the wisest of them all. The very romance, so to call it, in Samson and Jephthah, that so drew young Bunyan, was so wisely handled by this grandmother in Israel, as to carry her grandson's opening imagination and heart absolutely captive to his God and Saviour. Little did Lois dream as she went on with her pious occupation that she was thereby writing her name so impressively on the immortal pages of

our New Testament. Little did she dream that we would actually be reading about her, and about her daughter Eunice, and about her grandson Timothy, in this far-off island of the seas. Little did that devout and chastened saint think that many of us in this congregation to-night would carry home lessons of salvation from her house to our own house at home.'

But to all this there is another side. I was down at the library yesterday, and, hunting among some old Elizabethan records, I came upon this unamiable entry:

'A defendant named Owen was sentenced in the Star Chamber for beating his grandfather. He was ordered to be whipped before the picture of his grandfather, as that gentleman was unable to come in person to the place where the sentence was to be executed.'

My walk back from the library was attended by some strange thoughts. The record that I have copied suggested an odd inquiry. Is it not a man's solemn duty to beat his grandfather? It is surely obvious that we can only make progress so far as each generation goes one step in advance of its predecessor. Whenever I bury a parent or a grandparent I make it my solemn business to point out that it is our bounden duty, not only to weep over their virtues, but to perpetuate them. Goodness is too precious a thing to commit to any grave. One of the most graceful stories in the Old Testament is the

story of the way in which Isaac digged again the wells of water which Abraham had digged, but which the Philistines had stopped up, 'and he called their names after the names by which his father called them.' That is a most touching and suggestive record. Isaac was determined that, the Philistines notwithstanding, nothing that his father had done should perish. The Philistines are always stopping up the wells that our fathers and grandfathers digged; and Civilization is the greatest Philistine of all. We are proud, for example, of our fast ships, our cheap postage, and our wireless telegrams. We say that these things span the chasms of life and link one land with another. But we forget that these things also create the chasms that they span. If there had been no ships, men would have been compelled to dwell together on one continent, and there would have been no need of ships to link land with land. In the beginning all men dwelt together as one family, and communication was easy. Your most elaborate contrivances for rapid and cheap communication are only frantic efforts to regain those primitive pleasures. Every ship that carries in its hold a mail from the old homeland to the new colony carries also on its decks the sons of the old land, who are leaving their parents and friends behind them, to make new homes across the water. You are thus bridging a chasm with one hand, and creating a chasm with the other. And in the net result you are no further forward, so far as

easy communication is concerned, than you were before the first inventor was born. Civilization is a rascal. It reminds me of those rabbit catchers who, to keep their trade from extinction, bred rabbits secretly whilst they trapped them openly. Civilization digs wells in the day-time and stops them up at night; so that when we come to look back over a long period of time we begin to wonder what progress we have really made.

By such things we must not be deceived. Life does not consist in reading the riddles of science or in accelerating the wheels of commerce. These things are excellent in themselves. But, as we have seen, these things merely bridge the chasms that they themselves create. In the result they give us a larger world, but it is not of necessity a better world. The grandfathers and grandmothers of our experiences, of our histories, and of our story books, stand for something. They represent a certain spirit, a certain temper, a certain atmosphere. Only so far as each generation can perpetuate the devoutness, the simplicity, and the goodness of its grandfathers and its grandmothers is it holding its own. And only so far as it is beating its grandfathers and grandmothers in these essential respects is it making any real progress.

II

THE HOOP-LA MAN

I

We were spending the night at Maori Glen, John Broadbanks and I. We had been appointed to visit a congregation about fifty miles back in the bush.

'I'll tell you what we'll do!' John exclaimed, when we met to discuss details. 'We'll drive it! We'll leave Mosgiel directly after dinner and get as far as Maori Glen that evening; we'll spend the night there and finish our journey next morning. What do you say?'

I said what I invariably said to John's proposals. Everything went well. We reached Maori Glen in the late afternoon; and, after a good tea at the boarding house, set out to explore the place. Maori Glen is the queerest little settlement in New Zealand; there was absolutely nothing to see; but the air was pleasant and we enjoyed an hour's aimless saunter. Then, just as we were turning our faces again towards the boarding house, we fancied that we heard some kind of music; and, as we rounded a bend in the road, we saw in the distance the glare of many lights. Involuntarily quickening our steps, we were soon at the scene of the commotion. On a large open space were a couple of tents, one a good

deal larger than the other, and round the tents about half the population of Maori Glen seemed to have gathered. The larger tent sheltered a roundabout, and the genial proprietor was driving a brisk business. There were gaily-caparisoned horses, whose arched necks and haughty bearing betrayed their high mettle and proud lineage, prancing as they revolved to the strains of the lively music. There were boats, too, that pitched and tossed in a way that placed beyond all shadow of doubt the seamanship of their occupants. And, for the accommodation of those who desired to display neither their equestrian nor their nautical prowess, there were chariots that neither pranced nor pitched, but went sedately round and round. These were all under the canopy of the larger tent; but what were the contents of the smaller one? All that we could see was the throng surrounding it and one mysterious word blazoned upon its canvas-roof—the strange word 'Hoop-la.' But what was 'Hoop-la'? I was relieved on finding that John was as ignorant as was I. We joined the crowd, however, and quickly solved the mystery. In the centre of the tent was a table, surmounted by several tiers of shelves. Round the table and on the shelves were all kinds of commodities—cakes of soap, packets of tea, bottles of pickles, jars of jam, pipes, tops, nuts, dolls, necklaces, and brooches; an extraordinary medley. A rope ran round the table at a distance of about six feet from it. The proprietor of the business stood inside this

ring, hiring out hoops at a penny each or seven for sixpence. If his customer succeeded in completely encircling with the hoop one of the articles set out before him, that article was his. Having time on our hands, we stood for awhile and watched. It was worth watching—for more reasons than one.

II

For, in watching the antics of the Hoop-la man and his patrons, we were peering into a magic mirror. The drama of the ages was reflected here. It was the world in miniature; a pocket edition of the universe.

We saw *Hope* come! Eager schoolboys elbowed their way through the throng, gazed with sparkling eyes on the rich array of prizes, and scampered home to exchange promises for pennies or, if needs be, to withdraw from the money box their meagre savings. Here at last was the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow! Here was Tom Tiddler's ground! Here was wealth waiting to be won! Then, having stored their pockets with the coveted cash, they hurry back to secure the tempting treasure. So Hope came!

We saw *Love* come! A thick-set young fellow, with ruddy face and laughing eyes, probably a ploughman from one of the adjacent farms, pressed his way into the circle, bringing with him a pretty girl with dark eyes, a white dress and a fluttering pink gossamer. Again and again he beckoned to

the Hoop-la man for a fresh supply of rings. He tried hard and he tried often to encircle a glittering necklace or a sparkling brooch. Underneath his assumption of light-hearted indifference, I could see how feverishly anxious he was to succeed. Everybody knew why. It was partly that *she* might admire his prowess with the hoops, and partly that *he* might see the shining ornaments shedding their lustre on the only breast worthy to wear them. So Love came!

We saw *Greed* come! Unlike the schoolboys, who had set their hearts on taking something home to mother, and unlike the sturdy young ploughman whose sole ambition was centred in the pretty face at his shoulder, this man has no thought save for himself. What he wins he will sell. How much can he make? With gleaming eyes he tries over and over and over again, unable to conceal his inordinate gratification when some trifle is encircled, and equally unable to conceal his vexation when the hoop trundles fruitlessly to the ground. So Greed came!

III

In this small up-country throng, every human instinct seems to be represented. Look at this fellow in the cap and the grey suit. He regards the whole thing in the light of an investment. He carefully calculates the number of hoops that he can afford to throw in his attempt to secure a particular prize. He represents the *commercial* instinct. Now look

at the fellow in the straw hat and the plaid tie! He bursts into the circle, merrily assures his companions that if he has to spend the night with the Hoop-la man, he means to get the pipe with the silver band. He represents the *sporting* instinct. Mark the little fellow over there as, out of the wealth of his own dearly-bought experience, he carefully advises his younger brother, and then anxiously watches the smaller boy's throw! There you have the *filial* instinct. See those labouring men in their working clothes, fathers of families most of them! Notice how they aim at the pickle bottles, the jam-jars and the packets of tea! They represent the *domestic* instinct. And, just once more, look at that little maiden—a girl of eleven or twelve—spending the last penny or two of her pocket-money in a gallant endeavour to secure the unbreakable doll with the pretty blue sash! She wants it, not for herself, but for the tiny tot clinging to her skirts. See how the little thing stands there, forgetful of everything and everybody, but watching with strained anxiety her big sister's aim. She has come to her last throw. I do believe—yes, she has it! Well, I am glad that she has won it. See how proudly she hands the coveted doll to the little thing beside her! She is not in the least offended because the excited youngster, forgetting even to thank her, snatches at it and rushes off to show her treasure to the family group behind. She understands; for is she not betraying, in every act and look and gesture, the first impulses

of the *maternal* instinct? Bravo! She has lost all her pocket-money; and her only compensation is the kiss that the baby was sent back to give her; but she is as happy as a queen and will scarcely sleep to-night for the joy of it!

Thus it was that, standing there in the dusk, on the fringe of the crowd, John Broadbanks and I saw all the world come pouring into the tent of the Hoop-la man!

IV

'Had enough?' John asked, at length.

I assented and we turned to go. The round-about was still in full blast. The high mettle and proud lineage of the gaily-caparisoned steeds evidently rendered them superior to anything in the shape of weariness. The boats were still riding a sea that no atmospheric tranquillity could calm. The chariots still pursued the even tenour of their way, neither prancing nor pitching, but careering round and round the tent in accordance with the noblest traditions of the Roman amphitheatre. And, still more noticeable, the people were happy. The hum of their gossip and the peals of their laughter deadened the shrillness of the music to which the horses pranced. As we emerged from the glare of this tented field into the outer darkness of the country road, the two shows that we had just visited disentangled themselves, in my mind, the one from the other. They seemed to stand no longer

side by side, but miles apart. I looked at the one and I looked at the other and, examining them separately in this way, I saw them in a new light. It was no longer a Study in Companionships but a Study in Contrasts. The Hoop-la man and the Roundabout man had nothing in common. They stood in sharp and vivid contrast the one with the other.

V

They even differed in appearance. The Hoop-la man was a little man, lean and lantern-jawed, with a cadaverous face and a smile so obviously forced that it in no way helped to mend matters. I did not see until afterwards that his smile *could* only be a forced smile; but we shall come to that in due time. I do not know that the Roundabout man was any taller than his neighbour, but he boasted a fine rotundity of figure, a jolly and rubicund face, eyes overflowing with merriment and good humour, and a laugh that seemed to shake the planet.

Then, thinking of them in this way, it struck me that there was a distinct difference between the two crowds. The crowd around the Hoop-la tent was stagnant; it lacked vivacity; there was no life in it. The people who stood round were of three classes. Some, like ourselves, were simply lookers-on. Others were mustering up courage to test their skill with the hoops. And there was a third class. Like wild things that have been hurt and that creep off into the forest to await the healing of their wounds,

or like moths that have singed their wings in the flame and that flutter back into the deepest recesses round the room, some of these people had shrunk back from the glare of the ring to nurse their disappointment in the darkness. But, round the Roundabout, the crowd was very different. It was full of sparkle, full of gaiety, full of animation. The people round the Hoop-la tent were silent, almost sullen. The people round the Roundabout were full of life and laughter. They hummed the tunes that the Roundabout was playing and their hands and feet moved to the lively music. What was the fundamental difference between the two tents? What elusive secret lurked behind the gloom of the one and the gaiety of the other? How was the contrast to be accounted for? It was when I looked into my own face, and asked myself this question, that the truth broke suddenly upon me.

VI

To be sure! There was all the difference in the world between the two.

The Hoop-la man was making his money out of the *disappointments* of the people.

The Roundabout man was making his money out of the *enjoyments* of the people.

The distinction is vital. The more fun the people have in the Hoop-la tent, the worse it is for the Hoop-la man. Their glad times are his bad times. He cannot laugh as the Roundabout man laughs.

He feels like smiling when the hoops are all going astray; but he dare not taunt his patrons. So, to please them, he tries to smile when the hoops are encircling the prizes; but anyone with half an eye can see that the smile is forced. The essential fact is that his interests are not the people's interests. Every ring that misses its mark and goes trundling off the table means a little lump in somebody's throat or a tug at somebody's heart, but it means a penny into the pocket of the Hoop-la man. Every hoop that encircles a packet of tea or a glittering necklace brings a smile to the face of the happy thrower, but the Hoop-la man can with difficulty conceal his displeasure. Between him and the people round the ring there is no bond of sympathy. They are fighting him, and he them, all the time. Their gain is his loss; their successive disappointments are his secret delights. And most of the people went away disappointed. He could make his living on no other terms. Those who threw their hoops in vain turned sadly away, whilst the prizes of the more successful throwers only led to further investments and final discomfiture. Sooner or later, humiliation and disgust came to almost everybody. I only saw one person depart in the flush of triumph, and that was the little maiden who won the unbreakable doll with the blue sash for her baby sister at her side. And her behaviour is easily explained. In the first place, she had spent her last penny; in the second place, she had won the only prize that she really coveted; and,

in the third place, her exultation may have been merely a reaction following upon a long series of vexatious disappointments. There can be no doubt about it; the Hoop-la man thrives on the disappointments of his customers.

With the Roundabout man it is quite otherwise. He is never so happy as when the fun is fast and furious. The more enjoyment the people get out of the horses and the boats and the chariots, the better he is pleased. He may get tired at times of the ever-recurring tunes to which the horses prance and the chariots revolve; but he never gets tired of the music of the children's laughter. The set stare of the spirited steeds may at times pall upon his vision; but he is never weary of watching the smiling faces round the tent. The fact is that the people's interests are his interests. Their pleasure is his profit. Between him and them there is no conflict at all. He and they are one.

VII

I said that I saw all the world come to the tent of the Hoop-la man. I should have said that I saw all the worlds gathering there. For all things—material, philosophical, ethical, spiritual—are reflected in that little tent as stars are reflected in a wayside pool. If I knew how to moralise—an art that I never practised and that I am now too old to learn—I fancy I could show that every man living is either a Hoop-la man or a Roundabout man. We are each of us

doing something—keeping a shop, teaching a class, breaking stones, chopping down trees or, perhaps, preaching the Gospel. It matters not what. The point is that we are each of us doing it as the Hoop-la man does it, or as the Roundabout man does it. Here, for example, are two tradesmen. They both want to make money; why else should they trade? The first does not mind what disappointment he reflects upon his customers so long as a handful of silver is transferred from their pockets to his. This, of course, is the Hoop-la man. The other believes that a satisfied customer is a merchant's best advertisement. Nothing that is not likely to give satisfaction is allowed to go out of his store. This, of course, is the Roundabout man. I am not skilled to read the horoscope of these two men as it affects any other world than this; but you have only to look into the faces of the Hoop-la man and the Roundabout man as you pass their tents some evening, to see which of them, in *this* world, is having the best of it.

III

'NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS!'

I

It is all right! No news is good news! Jesus Himself said so. The comfort that we administer to our hungry hearts when distant friends are silent has the divinest sanction. He was speaking, it is true, of the things pertaining to the world invisible; but, as a rule, the principles that govern the affairs of *that* radiant realm apply with equal force to the affairs of *this* one. Both are under the same management. Milton, they say, was blind; but he saw quite clearly that earth

> Is but the shadow of heaven and things therein
> Each to other like more than on earth is thought.

No news is good news! Every provision, He said, would be made for our happiness in the world into which He was going. *'If it were not so, I would have told you!'* The words, spoken so casually, and therefore in danger of passing unnoticed, are among the most remarkable that even He ever uttered. *'If it were not so!'* If, out beyond the shades of death, there awaited us any experience of strangeness or loneliness or homelessness, He would have told us

all about it. If, in that blaze of mystery and pageant of wonder upon which mortal eyes have never gazed, there were anything to startle or affright us, He would have mentioned it. Had there been the slightest ground for apprehension, He would have stated it frankly. Had there been a shadow of uncertainty as to our felicity in that new life, He would have warned us. Since all is well, there is nothing to be said. He cannot enter into definitions and descriptions. As Mr. H. G. Wells observes in his *First Men in the Moon,* you cannot describe the phenomena of one world in the phraseology of another. The terms will not fit. They would convey crude and even false impressions. Had He, on that last night, attempted to describe the life of heaven in the language of earth, He could only have imprinted upon the minds of His people impressions that would have been mere caricatures of the reality. So He said nothing. Speech could only have led to confusion. But, in his speechlessness, He said a very striking thing about His speechlessness. His reticence, He said, was to be construed as a promise. All is well! Every provision has been made! Every slightest need has been anticipated! When the soul makes its superb adventure into the infinitudes that lie within the veil, it will be abundantly satisfied. *'If it were not so, I would have told you!'* Of all our golden silences, there is no silence so golden as that. *'If it were not so!'* No news is good news.

II

Now this involves a stupendous principle. Indeed, it throws an entirely new light on the gospel story and illumines common life at every point. The important factor is that, in view of these words, we are justified in regarding the New Testament as a portrayal of *Jesus at His worst!* If they mean anything, they mean that He has been scrupulously careful to reveal to us everything that is at all forbidding in His kingdom and service. Every circumstance that might conceivably repel or disappoint us has been unfolded with the most painstaking detail and with the most pitiless candour. The difficulties to be surmounted before the kingdom of heaven can be entered are presented in the strongest possible terms. The sacrifices demanded are stated in the most vivid and terrible language. Men are urged to count the cost before committing themselves to a life of discipleship, and the cost is made to appear almost prohibitive. No man ever yet found the entrance so narrow, and the way so rough, and the difficulties so great, as the New Testament represents them. Contrast the spirit of the New Testament with the average evangelistic address. The evangelist courts; the New Testament cautions: the evangelist woos; the New Testament warns. I often wondered, as a child, at the trouble that the New Testament takes to make Jesus appear rude and ungracious and needlessly severe. His treatment of such men as the rich

young ruler and His treatment of such women as the distressed mother of Syro-Phoenicia bewildered me. And when I heard Him say to His own mother, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' I was horrified. Preachers and teachers took great pains to gloss these things over for me and to soften them down; but there they were! And I begin to understand now why they are there. The sacred records will conceal nothing that may, under any conceivable system of interpretation, reflect unfavourably upon the Personality of Jesus. They give us Jesus at His worst in order that we may feel that if, in every other respect, He were not exactly as we should wish Him to be, they would most certainly have told us. Every incident in which, at first blush, Jesus appears to have acted sternly or spoken harshly, is recorded in the most graphic detail.

It is very noticeable, too, that, whenever He caught His disciples cherishing elusive and rainbow-tinted visions as to the honours that He intended to confer, and the rewards that He proposed to bestow, He shattered those dreams on the instant. Whenever they talked of their discipleship in terms that showed that they regarded discipleship as a stepping-stone to coronation, He invariably told them plainly that discipleship was a stepping-stone to crucifixion. When their excited fancy conjured up visions of thrones and crowns and sceptres, He startled them by telling them that the man who would follow Him must take up his cross and tread

the pathway of suffering to the bitter end. He was determined that no man should enter His kingdom under false pretences. He saw to it that the grim and dreadful shadow of the Cross fell athwart everything. And then, having urged all men everywhere to count the cost to the uttermost farthing before becoming His disciples, He opened His arms and bade the whole world come. 'I have told you the worst,' He seems to say, 'I have told you the worst. The best it is not possible to tell. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. Nor tongue nor pen can describe the joy that comes to those who bravely tread the path to which I call them. Their felicity is assured; *"if it were not so, I would have told you!"* '

III

It is a lesson in the *High Art of Assumption.* Assumption is an art; indeed, it is one of the fine arts. The pity of it is that, in this art, so few of us are artists. We dabble in it because we like it, but we rarely excel. We never become masters. We do not take the trouble to learn. We assume thoughtlessly, unskilfully, hastily. And, like most of the things that we do hurriedly, we do it badly. Unless we are distinctly told that things are all right, we are apt to assume that they are all wrong. Jesus tells us that we are to act on a diametrically opposite principle. *'If it were not so, I would have told you.'*

Unless we are distinctly told that things are all wrong, we are to assume that they are all right. When we have to choose between our hopes and our fears, we are to take sides with our hopes. If matters stood as our fears suggest that they do, He would have told us. He is speaking of His Father's house. *'In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you.'* And he tells us that, in thinking of *His* Father's house, we must adopt the same principles that we adopt in thinking of *our* fathers' houses. We must saturate our thought in trust and confidence. In the old days, when we scampered home from school at the ringing of the noon-day bell, we knew that dinner would be ready for us as soon as we arrived. If it were not so, Mother would have told us. When we came in from our play at night, limbs weary and eyes heavy, we knew that our cosy beds would be ready to receive us. If it were not so, Mother would have told us. These things were never talked about: they were always taken for granted. If, on some rare occasion, Mother expected to be absent from home on our return, the position was discussed with us and we were told where to go and what to do. But such emergencies occurred but rarely. We sauntered off to school every morning, and we hurried out to play every night, with a sweet and strong and simple faith singing itself within our hearts. We threw all care to the winds. No shade of anxiety clouded our brows. We were quietly

confident that, when we came home, everything would be ready for us. If it were not so, we should have been told. Jesus bids us carry the same happy confidence into all the affairs of this life and to project it into our anticipations of the life to come. We are to model the grave assumptions of maturity on the gay assumptions of childhood. We may be sure that the Father has thought of everything. *'In My Father's house are many resting-places: if it were not so, I would have told you.'* When Mother said nothing, we knew that everything would be ready when we came. No news is good news.

IV

Here, then, is the *Logic of the Unrevealed*. We know very little of the life to come. The years that remain to us here, and the eternal years beyond, are alike hidden from our view. But it is all right. *'If it were not so, He would have told us.'* The future —here and hereafter—is in the Father's hands; and when the Father says nothing, it is because every provision is being made. That is what He meant when He spoke of the sparrows and the ravens and the lilies. The Father provides for them all without talking about it. 'Be not anxious, therefore,' Jesus said, 'for your heavenly Father knoweth all your needs.' When Mother knew our needs, we knew that it was all right: if it were not so, she would have told us. Jesus asks us to trust His Father in

the same way. We know, I say, very little of the life to come. And why should we? In the old days we knew very little of the plans that Father and Mother were making, but we trusted them and were happy. Even when the time came to move from one house to another, we were not anxious or alarmed. We were merely curious. We felt that, if Father and Mother had made the arrangement and were satisfied, we should be perfectly happy. I am not eager for an exact description of the house—the Father's house—to which I am one day to be taken. I know that there is nothing to fear, and I know that every need of mine will have been abundantly met. *'If it were not so, He would have told me.'* I read the other day of an illuminating conversation between a sick man and his doctor. The doctor was leaving the bedside when the patient suddenly turned to him and said:

'Doctor, I want to ask you a question.'

'Yes,' he said. 'What is it?'

'Am I going to get well?'

The doctor hesitated a moment, and the patient went on:

'Don't treat me as a child. I have a right to know. Tell me.'

'Well,' he said, 'you may recover this time; but the second or third attack is pretty sure to prove fatal.'

The sick man caught the doctor's coat and said to him:

'Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side.'

Very quietly the doctor said: 'I do not know.'

'You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side!'

The doctor was holding the handle of the door, on the other side of which came sounds of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with eager show of gladness. Turning to the patient, the doctor said:

'Did you notice that dog? He had never been in this room before. He did not know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here and when the door was opened he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know that my Master is there, and that is enough. And when the door opens I shall pass through quite fearlessly and with great gladness!'

It is all right! Nobody knows what a day may bring forth; and nobody wants to know. Nobody knows what lies within the veil; and nobody wants to know. No news is good news. Jesus Himself said so. All is well—for this life and for every other: *'If it were not so, I would have told you.'* When Margaret Ogilvy, the mother of Sir J. M. Barrie, lay dying, she asked for her Bible. But her sight was too dim; she could not read. She let it fall open on the counterpane. She knew that, of its

own accord, it would open at the fourteenth of John. She had turned to that great passage every day for years, and the Bible now invariably opened there. She looked towards the familiar words—the *'many mansions'* and the *'if it were not so'*—but she could not make them out. At last she put her lips to the text and kissed it. 'Will that do instead?' she asked. It did perfectly. It is the natural greeting of a child on the threshold of the Father's house.

IV

THE GOLD UNDER THE GRASS

I

A BANK is a terribly prosaic affair. It freezes your blood as you approach it. Stand at the great entrance hall, with its stone steps, its granite pillars, and its tiled floor, and watch the tides of humanity surge in and out! One look is stamped upon all faces. It is a look of uncompromising stolidity, almost amounting to frigidity. It is, of course, a pure affectation. The indifference is only assumed. In the nature of things, smiles and tears cannot be far from the surface. The business that brings these people to the bank represents to most of them the triumph and the tragedy of life. Some of them have come to pay in cheques—such big ones! Some of them have come to cash their cheques—such little ones! If only some sensitive piece of mechanism could register the emotions of these people as they enter and leave, what tales it would tell. Here is the flush of pride, the exultation of success! And here is the bitterness of disappointment, the gall of defeat! But, as you see them coming and going, you would never suspect it. Even such smiles and frowns as you do occasionally detect are fitful and unreliable. It is the people

whose hearts are breaking who try to smile; and it is the men whose tide of fortune is at the full who scowl or look bored. The bank slays all sentiment as soon as you enter. You hear the chink of coin; you mark the matter-of-fact faces of clerks and tellers; you catch the subtle and mysterious atmosphere of the place; and you feel that you are as far from poetry as a polar explorer is from the tropics. Painfully prosaic is the bank.

The bank delivered our money from the element of risk, but it deprived it also of the element of romance. Until the bank came into existence, every crack and crevice glittered with golden possibilities. Men hid their money in all kinds of wild and wondrous places. I always enjoy reading that entry in the *Diary of Samuel Pepys* in which the good man describes the frantic search for the buried gold. He had asked his wife and his father to bury all his money in the garden; and, in due time, he takes them with him at dead of night, to hunt, by the light of a dark lantern, for the hidden treasure.

'But, Lord, what a tosse I was for some time in, that they could not justly tell where it was! I was out of my wits almost. And then to see how sillily they had hid it, not half a foot under ground, and in sight of the world from a hundred places!'

To make things worse, the bags had rotted in the earth; they burst on being removed; and the gold was scattered all over the garden. They spent the night carrying heaps of dirt into the house and

washing it by candle-light in search of coins. 'It made me mad!' he tells us; and when, at last, he crept away to bed, he could not get a wink of sleep for wondering how much of his wealth was still reposing among the roots of his cabbages.

In those days, you never knew the moment at which a fortune might unexpectedly appear. The world was a packet of surprises. At any thrust of the stick into a dark wayside hole, you might hear the musical jingle of coins. In any deep well or subterranean cavern, you might find a box of treasure. You could not disturb a stone in a cellar-floor without half-expecting to come upon a chest loaded to the lid with sparkling gems. If you went to the garden or the field, you felt that any thrust of the spade might expose wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. That was what Jesus meant when He said that the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Before the invention of banking, life was one vast, romantic treasure-hunt.

II

I do not know how long it took to make the world. I only know that it can be made all over again in twenty seconds. If you have any doubt about it, ask this man—the hero of the Master's treasure-story. You should have seen him just ten seconds before the ploughshare scattered the coins all over

the freshly-turned furrow; and you should have seen him ten seconds afterwards. Ten seconds before, life was as drab as drab could be. He was pursuing the same old round, following the same old dreamy routine. Same old field; same old furrows; same old oxen; same old plough: Up and down; round and round; it was as monotonous as anything could be. And then, just as he was wondering how much longer it must last, there was a jolt and a swirl and a glint and a glitter, and the soft brown sods were all sprinkled with gleaming gold! He stoops and finds that there is more and more and more! He rises and all the world is changed! So swiftly does the romantic emerge upon the commonplace!

It is not always, but it is very often so. Here and there a man may come upon his treasure as a result of a long and patient search, but, quite as frequently, men come upon it unexpectedly and by surprise. They plough their common fields and the hidden gold appears! Shepherds are watching sheep as shepherds should; and, suddenly, they hear the angels sing! Scientists are watching stars, as scientists should, and all at once they see the star that leads to the Light of the World! Fishermen are fishing as fishermen should, when all unexpectedly a Stranger comes down to the shore, Who bids them leave their nets and fish for men! A customs officer goes down to his office, and, whilst seated at his desk, hears the resistless challenge of discipleship, the

clarion call of destiny! The man who faithfully follows his allotted path may at any moment find other worlds impinging upon this! He may turn a bend of the dusty road and find himself face to face with the glory ineffable! Like crocuses that peep up through the snow, life's golden romances burst through our most frigid commonplaces! In the most unlikely places the hidden hoards lie buried.

III

The gold is under the grass! The prospector says so. He does not find the nuggets littering the surface. He has to break up the soil and scour its hidden depths. That is why the gold-fields are called the diggings. The treasure does not lie on the field: it is hid in the field.

The gold is under the grass! The farmer says so. He may own broad acres and they will ruin him if he lets them lie. He cannot become wealthy by walking about his fields. He must break them up. He must plough and plough often, and plough deeply. The treasure does not litter the field: it is hid in it.

The gold is under the grass! My most trusted teachers have all told me so. Take William Law. Dr. Johnson tells us that he owes his soul to William Law; and John Wesley says almost as much. But to whom did William Law owe his soul? To Jacob Behmen, he would say. And how did Law fall under the influence of Behmen? Let him tell his

own story. He came by accident upon one of Behmen's books. 'When I first began to read it, he tells us, 'it put me into a perfect sweat. But as I discerned sound truths and the glimmering of a deep ground and sense even in the passages not then clearly intelligible to me, I followed the impulse to dig in Behmen with continual prayer to God for His help to understand His servant, till at length I discovered the wonderful treasure there was hid in this field.' What wealth came to William Law and to Samuel Johnson and to John Wesley, and to the whole wide world through that deep digging that day!

The gold is under the grass! Experience has told me so. Love at first sight is, after all, comparatively rare. As a rule we meet a man a hundred times before it dawns upon us that his friendship is gradually becoming indispensable to us. 'He was all gold!' an old man said to me the other day, as he turned sadly from the graveside of his friend. 'And did you recognize his worth when you first met him?' I asked. 'Man!' he replied, almost sharply, 'it was ten years before I saw anything in him! But when I got to know him better I found that he was all gold!'

The gold is under the grass! The old Master in the *Poet at the Breakfast Table* told me so. 'I never yet saw the man that couldn't teach me something. I don't believe there's a man so stupid that I couldn't go to school to him for half-an-hour, and be the

wiser for it. Sometimes you'll find a bit of a pond-hole in a pasture, and you'll plunge your walking-stick into it and think you are going to touch bottom. But you find you are mistaken. Some of these little stagnant pond-holes are a good deal deeper than you think; you may tie a stone to a bed-cord and not get soundings in some of 'em. The country boys will tell you they have no bottom, but that only means that they're mighty deep; and so a good many stagnant, stupid-seeming people are a great deal deeper than the length of your intellectual walking-stick, I can tell you!'

The gold is under the grass! A man may read his Bible fifty times, as a man may walk fifty times across a field. In both instances the exercise is an enjoyable and profitable one. And then, one day, some deeper experience of joy or of sorrow will send him to his Bible like a man who goes not to parade the field but to plough it. And, piercing the surface, he lights upon the gold! He finds grace and mercy and peace—riches unsearchable, inexhaustible, unfathomable, unexplorable—and he is amazed at remembering how near he often came to affluence without suspecting it.

IV

I remember, many years ago, spending a holiday at a small up-country township in New Zealand. On the Sunday I went to the service held in the school-house. I was accompanied by Mr. Andrew

Crouch, a merchant of Auckland, who happened to be staying at the same boarding-house. The service was conducted by a local preacher from Appleford. He preached on the Parable of the Treasure hid in the Field, and made a great point of the necessity for sacrifice. This man, he pointed out, sold all that he had in order to purchase the field. His house, his furniture, his oxen, and his plough—all had to go. Walking back from the school to the boarding-house, I asked Mr. Crouch how the service had impressed him.

'Ah, well,' he replied, slowly, 'I suppose I look at things too much from a business point of view; but I felt that the preacher was missing the principal factor in the story. He said that the man had to make great sacrifices in order to purchase the treasure. But did he? He made great sacrifices in order to purchase the field; but he got the treasure for nothing. And since, presumably, he paid no more for the field than it was worth, he still possessed, in addition to the treasure, the equivalent of all that he had sold. The *preacher* implied that the selling of his goods was a heart-breaking business; the *text* said that for very joy he went and sold all that he had.'

As soon as we reached the boarding-house, I went to my room and looked into the matter. I saw that Mr. Crouch was right. In the possession of the field, the man recaptured all his forfeited possessions: the hidden gold cost him absolutely nothing. A man,

that is to say, regains in this world all that he surrenders in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven: the kingdom of heaven itself is a clear and magnificent extra. He obtains it without money and without price.

V

'The field is the world.' And who was it that gave all that He had and bought that field? It only happened once; it could only happen once; for there was only One rich enough to pay the price. He paid it, and paid it, like the man in the story, joyfully. 'For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame.'

'For *joy* thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field!'

'For the *joy* that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame!'

The seller of that field might have known, from the haste and eagerness and excitement of the purchaser, that he had discovered something in the field that no other eye had ever seen! And certainly I can never gaze upon the Cross without feeling that the Redeemer of the World must have seen some beauty in our poor fallen race that we men, with all our million million eyes, have never been clever enough to detect.

V

PEGGY

Hamish McLeod was a bundle of astonishments. The first thing about him that surprised me was that, although he always brought a horse to church, I never saw him ride it. He lived on a farm at the back of Saddle Hill, about four miles from Mosgiel. His was a striking figure. If you had once looked full into his stern Puritanical face, you would never, to your dying day, forget it. His deep-set grey eyes, which seemed to be crouching in the recesses of their dark cavernous sockets and hiding behind a heavy growth of shaggy eyebrows, looked you through and through. His forehead was massive and wrinkled; his white beard reached almost to his waist and completed the impression of patriarchal severity.

Everybody on the road was familiar with the tall gaunt form of Hamish. Winter and summer, in all sorts of weathers, you would see the old man trudging along the mountain road on Sunday mornings. He came and went with the regularity and punctuality of an automaton. A goods train passed through the district on its way to Dunedin on Sunday mornings, and the stationmaster at Fairfield once told me that if Hamish vanished round the

shoulder of the hill before the train emerged from the Wingatui tunnel, he knew that the train was late. Hamish never hurried and he never dawdled. He called nowhere on the road: he spoke to nobody he met. He just jogged along, his shoulders slightly bent, his face to the ground, his thoughts, to all appearances, far, far away. In his right hand he carried a small stick that was supposed to represent his riding-whip; in his left—always behind him—he clutched the reins by which he led his old bay mare. Exactly at five minutes to eleven he always entered the church gate and led Trixie to the stable. I often stood at the vestry door and greeted him, but, save for a nod and a murmur, I received no reply. As he passed out of church I often shook his hand; but I never lured him into conversation. I attributed it at first to the shyness that some people feel, or the reticence that they assume, in the presence of ministers; but I soon found that Hamish treated everybody else in the same way. I could find nobody in whom he had ever confided; and I used to fancy that even Trixie, as he led her to and from her stall, eyed him as though he were something of a mystery.

The second surprise awaited me when, in the course of my pastoral visitation, I approached Hamish's door. I had always understood that there was a Mrs. McLeod. In driving along the road to the farm, I had tried (with the usual success) to conjure up the image of this good lady, and had

speculated upon the kind of welcome that I should receive at her hands. As she had never once accompanied her husband to church, I could scarcely hope for a particularly sympathetic reception. But then again, it occurred to me, she might be an invalid or have some other excellent reason for not making the tedious journey with Hamish. This theory sprang from my mind and entered my soul with all the force of a stinging rebuke. To be sure! How dull-witted I had been! I was ashamed of my lack of imagination. I was yet unmarried in those days: a woman's sagacious insight and unerring intuition would have saved me from such stupidity. The frail wife on the out-of-the-way farm supplied the missing equation and went a long way towards clearing up the mystery. It explained at once both the loneliness and the taciturnity of the old man. And to think that I—their minister—had, during the ten months that I had spent in Mosgiel, never taken the trouble to visit the suffering woman, nor shown to her burdened and careworn husband any sign of sympathy! Even as the homestead came into my view—a splash of snowy whiteness flecking the infinite expanse of green—I seemed to see the poor creature hobbling painfully about the kitchen, or perhaps I should find her stretched upon a couch in an adjoining bedroom. I did not relish the prospect of meeting her. Even though, pitying my clumsy mannish ways, she uttered no word reflecting on my thoughtlessness and neglect, her sad eyes

would look reproachfully up at me, filling my soul with bitterness and confusion. But by this time I had reached the big white gate and had fastened my pony to the post that stood close by.

The surprise came as I walked up the path, past a hive of bees, through the neat little garden plot, to the front door. For, out through the open window there floated to me the clear sweet trill of a girl's voice:

> And she's a' the world to me;
> And for bonnie Annie Laurie
> I'd lay me doon an' dee.

I paused for a moment, listening. How could I help it? Moreover, I was bewildered. Here was another factor in the situation of which my sluggish imagination had failed to warn me. The song stopped abruptly when I knocked, and, in five seconds, the doorway encased as bonny a specimen of Australasian womanhood as any man need wish to see. She was tall and strapping and plump, of ruddy face and laughing eyes, the picture of perfect health and abounding vigour. Her nut-brown hair peeped saucily out from beneath the folds of a pink sunbonnet. Her sleeves were rolled up to the elbows; she wore a big blue overall; and in her hand she held a duster. There she stood, surrounded by the ivy that, clambering over the doorway, reached down long straggling arms that seemed straining to touch her.

'Is Mr. McLeod at home?' I asked apologetically, for I had not quite forgiven myself for breaking the current of her song.

'I think he's about somewhere,' she replied, in a voice in which the music still lingered. 'What name shall I say?'

I told her. A look of surprise mantled her face, and then, I thought, a mischievous twinkle crept into those deep blue eyes of hers. Showing me to a chair, she vanished in quest of Hamish. As soon as she had gone the house had an empty feeling. By what strange law do we sense a presence in a dark room or feel that a house contains nobody except ourselves? As soon as I was left alone in the room, I felt instinctively but indubitably that the sick wife was a myth, a nonentity, a mere frolic of my fancy. No such person existed. But, on the other hand, somebody else existed of whom my wayward fancy had given me no inkling. Who was the girl in the pink sunbonnet? I was still wrestling with this tantalizing problem when my conjectures were disturbed by a heavy tread at the back door, and, after a scraping of boots and one or two other preliminaries—undertaken, I suspect, by the order of the girl in the sunbonnet—Hamish entered the room.

The first five minutes were marked by a series of awkward silences and senseless snippets of conversation. We exchanged commonplaces about the weather, about the crops and about the conditions

of life in New Zealand. This led, naturally enough, to our talking of the Mother Country—the dear Homeland across the seas from which we had both come. I may have blurted out the secret that in those days held all my heart, a secret connected with the voyage across those self-same seas of another emigrant who was so soon to arrive and fill my life with sunshine. At any rate, whatever it was, something must have stirred a tender memory in the withered heart of Hamish, loosening his usually silent tongue.

I have lived under the shadow of the mountains. I have seen the beetling crags that crown their summits buried for months beneath their shining coat of snow. The whole stupendous mass is frigid, icy, adamantine. Not one trickling rill descends the bushy slopes. Then, in the spring, there comes a sudden foretaste of the coming summertime. The snow melts; the mountain torrents are swollen; through every gorge and glen the waters come streaming down. As we sat there talking of Home, and as my confidences reminded him of love, of hope, and of the roseate dreams that brides and bridegrooms cherish, a breath of spring swept into the old man's heart, and, before he knew what he was doing, he was telling me his story. He, too, had come alone from the Motherland; and Jessie, in whose portrait, as he showed it to me, I could trace the outline of the girl in the sunbonnet, had followed him about two years later. They were a

little late in starting life under such new conditions. Boyhood and girlhood lay some distance behind them. After Jessie had plighted him her troth, Hamish had worked hard at his Ayrshire farm, but fortune had studiously avoided him. Jessie had waited patiently for the nest that he had promised to build; but her youth had slipped away whilst she lingered. At last, in desperation, Hamish had emigrated; he soon made a home among the great silent hills; and Jessie came to him. They were married on the very day of her arrival. But their joy was shortlived. They spent one golden year together, luxuriating during most of that time, not only in the bliss for which they had waited so long, and which they had found at last, but in the still more wondrous rapture that, they knew, a little child would bring. And as the time drew near for that little child to open to them the gates of heaven, they themselves grew childlike in the rippling ecstasy of their gladness. At length the great day came; the little child opened the gates of heaven, but not the heaven of which they had so fondly dreamed. For Jessie went in, and Hamish was left weeping outside the gate, a little child clasped in his trembling arms.

All this Hamish told me in his own blunt way, his face twitching convulsively from time to time as he struggled to repress the emotion that he could not bear to show. But he had not yet reached the climax of his grief. He paused for a moment, and,

as I saw something glisten on his cheek, I thought of the mountain torrents that in springtime come pouring down the rugged cliffs. His voice was fairly broken now.

'And Peggy's a warldlin,' he cried. 'She hasna' the fear o' God in her heart; she doesna' lo'e the kirk; she gangs her ain gait.'

It is little that a minister can say under such circumstances. I mumbled a few commonplaces; and, after some conversation on more general themes, we went out into the yard to get some water for my pony. As Hamish opened the door that led into the kitchen, I saw the merest suspicion of a skirt vanish round the outer doorpost. When we reached the farmyard no sign of Peggy was to be seen. Had she overheard, I wondered, her father's passionate outburst? A few minutes later I saw her in the kitchen. Hamish asked me to go with him up to the orchard to gather some apples to take back with me; but I excused myself, allowed him to go alone, and went into the kitchen to Peggy. She was so placed that, without being positively rude, she could not very well avoid me.

'Have you read this, Miss McLeod?' I asked, taking from my coat a pocket edition of *Great Expectations*. It bore on the cover a somewhat highly-coloured picture of Miss Havisham in her faded wedding-dress.

'Is it a novel?' she asked, as she glanced at the picture.

'Yes,' I answered, 'but a very good one. I have just finished it, and, if you care to read it, you are very welcome. It occurred to me that you are rather out of the way of the bookshops up here.'

'I am sorry,' she replied, 'but father does not like me to read novels; and,' looking again at the picture, 'I am sure he would object to that one.'

I urged her to take it, promising to report my conduct to her father on his return from the orchard, and to take back the book if he still objected.

Hamish shook his head dubiously, but did not absolutely veto the loan, so I left the book in Peggy's keeping. When she returned it I lent her another. This went on until I was happily installed in the Manse, and I then felt that the time was ripe for a bolder policy. As I was walking up the main Mosgiel street one afternoon I saw Peggy driving home in a springcart. She had evidently been taking eggs to the store and butter to the factory. I stepped out into the roadway.

'Peggy,' I said, 'we are having a little party at the Manse on Monday night, and we particularly want you to come and sing.'

'Oh,' she laughed, 'but I don't know any sacred pieces.'

'No; but we want you to sing *Annie Laurie.*'

She laughed; and I eventually persuaded her to come. On the question of singing she would not, however, commit herself.

She came to the Manse that Monday evening.

Elsie Hammond and she struck up a friendship which—although they are both married and dwell many miles apart—continues unbroken to this day; and, towards the close of the evening, she sang *Annie Laurie.*

Hamish was very sceptical about all this. He could never satisfy himself that I had been ordained to lend novels to Peggy, or to encourage her in singing her "warldly sangs." I noticed, however, that he very frequently brought a big bag of his rosiest apples, or a basket of his choicest eggs to the Manse on his way down to the church.

One other thing I noticed. About this time Hamish lost his reputation for regular habits. Sometimes he came trudging along the road leading Trixie as of old. But quite as often he came seated in the springcart, Peggy holding the reins. And, on these occasions, Peggy sat beside him in the church.

At about this time I was given the opportunity of visiting England. During my absence Athol Sidwell, of Balclutha—a young minister who had recently been ordained—occupied my pulpit for a good many Sundays. During his term as locum tenens he wrote to me from time to time, giving me all the news concerning my people. One morning as I was sitting at breakfast in the old home at Tunbridge Wells, a letter arrived bearing the Mosgiel postmark. It was from Sidwell, and was full of chatty details concerning men and things. 'You will

be sorry to hear,' he said, 'that, whilst Miss McLeod was riding over the hills on Tuesday, Trixie put her foot into a rabbit-hole and fell. Miss McLeod's leg was broken, but she is doing well. I have visited her twice, and she asks to be remembered to you.' I anxiously awaited his next letter, due three weeks afterwards. It came, and contained excellent news. 'Peggy McLeod is practically well again,' he said. 'She has been telling me of the talks that she has had with you, and has quite made up her mind, on your return, to join the church.' This was the best news that reached me whilst in England.

Peggy was as good as her word. It was a very happy day, both for Hamish and me, when I received her into the membership of the church. That was in 1903. I left New Zealand for Tasmania in 1906. During those three years Sidwell often preached at Mosgiel, and always made a point of visiting the farm over the hills. Some years after my settlement at Hobart, I revisited New Zealand. As I was stepping ashore, I was handed a telegram from Sidwell, imploring me to break my journey at Balclutha. Happily, I was able to do so. Imagine my astonishment when Peggy—evidently the mistress of the manse—answered the door! She laughed as she drew me in. Hamish had sold the farm and was living with them. As we sat round the fire that evening Peggy went over to the piano and sang *Annie Laurie*. Then, coiling herself up on the hearthrug, she rested her head, with its

shock of nut-brown hair, on her father's knee. The old man bent forward and kissed her.

'Ay,' he said, looking across at me, 'they say over at the kirk that she's the best meenister's wife in the country, although,' he added, comtemplatively, 'she *does* sing such warldly sangs.'

But the strains of *Annie Laurie* had reached other ears than ours. A shrill little scream proceeded from the room overhead, and Peggy bounded upstairs to soothe the alarms of a tinier Hamish.

VI

A GHOST STORY

I

I WAS thinking this afternoon of the roomy old kitchen in which, as boys, we used to sit on winter nights and tell ghost stories. We turned down the gas in order to facilitate the creepy feeling; and then, with the firelight playing on our faces, we formed a semi-circle and talked of spectral things. The rustle of silk in the haunted room; mysterious groans that were heard in a certain chamber on a particular night of the year; the shadowy forms that were seen every now and again under the yew trees near the old manor house; the lights that were sometimes observed moving across the common; and the mysterious coach that rattled up the avenue at dead of night. We knew these tales by heart, and yet we loved to be terrified by them as we clustered round the fire and heard them told again. For a long, dark winter's evening, with the snow on the ground, and Christmas drawing near, there were no stories like the ghost-stories. They made us shudder; and, after hearing them, we could none of us go to bed in the dark; yet we came back to them again and again.

We were like those monkeys of which Darwin

tells. The great naturalist once inserted a small snake in a paper bag and slipped the package through the bars into the monkey cage at the Zoo. The curiosity of the animals prompted them to cluster round the mysterious parcel; but, when they opened it, and, peeping cautiously in, caught sight of the reptile, they swarmed in frantic haste up the bars to the top of the cage, screaming as they went. Yet they found it impossible to remain in that secure retreat. They could not leave the hideous thing alone. One by one they would creep stealthily down, peep once more into the bag, and again rush, shrieking, up the bars. They were convulsed with abject horror at sight of the snake, yet they could not keep away from it! They returned again and again to catch a glimpse of the thing that filled them with terror. It is one of the laws of life. We love the things we loathe. The frightful forces fascinate. The loathsome things allure. That is the philosophy of ghost-stories.

II

Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson were both fond of ghost-stories; John Wesley, in his Journal, has some really capital ghost-stories; Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* has a billowy but powerful passage on ghost-stories; indeed, ghost-stories are everywhere! I find ghost-stories even in my Bible. There is the story of the Witch of Endor in the Old Testament, and there is the story of the ghost on the lake in

the New. The Old Testament story has inspired a whole literature of conjecture: I shall, therefore, add not a single syllable to its bulk. The New Testament story has aroused less comment; but is distinctly more notable. The disciples had lived through an exhausting, bewildering, nerve-shattering day. Within a few hours they had witnessed a murder and a miracle. They were thoroughly unstrung. They had been seeing things that no intelligence could comprehend, and that no tongue could possibly explain. And now, on their way home, they were labouring at the oars in the darkness pulling against a strong head wind. They were in a condition in which men can be frightened by a feather; they were ready to fancy anything, to start at any sound, to attach unearthly significance to any unusual sight. All at once, peering through the blustery night, they distinctly made out a form gliding serenely over the surface of the troubled water.

'They thought it was a ghost'—I quote from Dr. Moffatt's translation—*'they thought it was a ghost, and shrieked aloud, for they all saw it and were terrified.'*

The apparition was capable of explanation, as all such mysteries are; but that did not detract from its weird, cold horror at the time. We all know now Who it was Whose perfect manhood gave Him that dominion over the unruly waters which all men at the beginning were destined to enjoy.

'Then at once He spoke to them, "Courage," he said, *"it is I; have no fear!" and he got into the boat beside them and the wind dropped.'*

And, with the dawn, they smiled at all their fears.

III

The occult bewilderment of a ghost-story is usually due to the existence of an unknown quantity. Some force is in operation of which the startled beholders are unaware. Somebody is present, and at work, of whose nearness the tale does not tell. Lacking this knowledge, we make assumptions which are not justified by facts. It was so in the case before us. The struggling oarsmen assumed that their Master had forsaken them! they took it for granted that He was over the hills and far away. It is never a safe assumption; it was, on this occasion, the fertile source of all their terrors. Since, according to their assumption, He was far from them, the form upon the water had to be explained on that hypothesis. In order to dovetail the explanation with their previous assumption, there was only one line of reasoning open to them. So they concluded that 'it was a ghost, and screamed aloud, for they all saw it, and were terrified.' If they had assumed His fondness, His nearness, and His care, they would have cried out in delight, as they saw the Lord of all the Waters hastening to their relief. But since they assumed His remoteness, His aloofness, His indifference, the figure on the

waves froze all their blood, paralysed all their powers, and they shrieked out that they beheld a ghost! I fancy that most of my own alarms are capable of a very similar explanation. As soon as my faith removes the divine element to a distance, the whole horizon moves with phantoms!

IV

Many years afterwards, Peter told this ghost-story to a young convert named Mark, and tried to account for that false and fatal assumption. Why did the tired rowers so rashly conclude that, because they were far from the land, they were, therefore, far from the Lord? Peter attributed the mistaken conclusion to a faulty memory. *'They had forgotten the miracle of the loaves!'* Yet the miracle of the loaves had been the outstanding event of that eventful day! It seems incredible that the thing that had astounded them at noon, they had forgotten by night. I understand now, after reading this ghost-story, why the day of miracles closed so abruptly. Astonishments swiftly become commonplace. Even a miracle is but a nine days' wonder, if, indeed, the wonder survives until the ninth day. Luther declares that if Moses had continued working miracles in Egypt for two or three years, the people would have become as accustomed to his performances as to the appearances of the sun and moon, and would have esteemed them no more! If

we saw angels every day we should not turn our heads to gaze upon their beauty.

They forgot! If only they had remembered that lordship over the forces of Nature which had been unfolded to them in the miracle of the morning, they would not have been scared by the spectre on the sea. But they forgot. In his Lectures to Business Men, Alexander Crampton sternly advises merchant princes never to employ a man who forgets. 'If, by way of condoning some dereliction of duty, a man says "I forgot,"—take the earliest opportunity of getting rid of him. If he really forgot a task that he was engaged to fulfil, he is *mentally* deficient and will be useless to you. And if, so far from recognizing the enormity of his offence of forgetfulness, he has the effrontery to plead it as an excuse for the neglect of his duty, he is *morally* deficient, and will be dangerous to you.' If the same austere maxim were applied to that service in which the toilers on the lake had enlisted, few of us would survive the searching ordeal. The miracle of the morning is forgotten amidst the shadows of the evening. The mercies of one day fail to fortify the faith of the next. We forget! And then the ghosts arrive!

V

Reading between the lines, I gather from the records that, when Peter first told this ghost-story

to his young comrade and disciple, Mark felt that Peter's explanation was an explanation that itself needed explaining.

'But why,' asks Mark, 'did you fail to identify the form upon the waves?'

'We had forgotten the miracle of the morning,' replies Peter.

'Yes,' retorts Mark, 'but why had you forgotten the miracle?'

'Because,' Peter answers sadly, *'because our hearts were hardened.'*

This conversation, if I understand the situation rightly, was the basis of Mark's statement that *'they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.'* And with that reply of Peter's to Mark's pertinent question, another of my illusions vanishes like a bubble that is burst. I have always fancied that, if only I could have walked with Jesus on the Galilean highways, looking into His face and listening to His voice, I could have cultivated a conscience of exquisite sensitiveness, a heart of perfect tenderness, a soul so radiantly beautiful that all men would recognize that I had caught the reflection of His own. As a child there was one hymn that I sang with yearning wistfulness and with deep emotion:

I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold;
I should like to have been with Him then.

I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look, when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'

But I know now that it was all a mistake. After listening to this conversation and reading this record, I see that the men who companied with Jesus were men of such flinty and adamantine hearts that the impression created by even the most wondrous miracles was so transitory that, like sand-castles swept away by the next tide, they vanished in the course of a few hours. And, now that I have made the discovery, I can scarcely forgive myself for not having made it before. One of the tragedies of life is that we get used to things. Those who live among the wild flowers rarely appreciate their fragrance. My own experience in the ministry ought to have taught me that no man is so apt to become deaf to the heavenly music, and blind to the heavenly vision, as the man who has every day of his life to stand in the presence of the sublimities of the faith and to take into his hands the eternal mysteries. No man is so apt to lost the reality and rapture of religion as the man who ministers in holy things every day of his life.

VI

Peter was still thinking about that weird and sensational experience on the lake when he penned his

second epistle. Remembering the frozen and flinty hearts that led to all the trouble, he gives a list of the graces that make the conscience sensitive, and the heart tender, and the soul beautiful. And then he abruptly adds that 'he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot make out distant objects, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins!'

'Blind . . . cannot make out distant objects . . . hath forgotten . . . '—these are the very selfsame words that we found in the ghost-story.

Did I say just now that it seems incredible that the men who witnessed the miracles of Jesus should so swiftly have forgotten them? Peter now makes a more astounding assertion. He says that a man whose heart has become hard may even forget that he was cleansed from his old sins! It seems the very climax of impossibility; but every man who knows his own treacherous heart will confess that it is true. And the man who has forgotten as much as that will never recognize his Lord again, but will see shadowy phantoms everywhere.

VII

A CITIZEN OF FAIRYLAND

STANLEY CHARLTON is a citizen of Fairyland. He is, that is to say, an architect; and, as everybody must have noticed, the brain of an architect is a realm of magic, a world of wonder. It always reminds me of that marvellous hat out of which the conjurer takes scores and scores of things, each of them bigger than the hat itself. The architect is the one man on the face of the earth who has contrived to retain undimmed and unspoiled all the charm and romance of his childhood. I spent last evening as Stanley's guest.

'I can easily imagine,' he began, settling himself in a comfortable armchair beside the fire and proceeding, in a leisurely way, to light a cigar, *'I can easily imagine——'*

'I know you can!' interjected his wife, rather cruelly; and the circle round the hearth hugely enjoyed our host's discomfiture.

It was certainly a clever thrust, and richly deserved the applause with which it was greeted. But it was pure playfulness, and only proved that—perhaps under his influence—she, too, had preserved intact her mischievous fondness for fun. For my hostess, sensible woman that she is, would be the last

to desire that her words should be taken at face value. She knows that it would be an ill day for her and for her children if Stanley's imagination broke down. It is the glory of the architect that *'he can easily imagine.'*

For imagination is the realm in which small children and great architects disport themselves. 'Babies,' said Dr. Johnson once, in his dogmatic way, 'babies do not want to hear about babies. They like to be told of giants and castles, and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds!' Precisely! They like to see castles, giants' castles; castles in the air! And it is the business of the architect to see just such castles, houses that do not yet exist, and to draw realistic pictures of them for less imaginative folk. The architect is a citizen of *the-land-that-never-was*. He lives by his fine flights of fancy. He deals in dreams. He is eternally engaged in building castles in the air. He inhabits a charmed domain into which ordinary mortals may not enter. He walks through the world with his head in the clouds, and it is a good thing for us all that it is so. For it is because he has his head in the clouds that we have our feet on the fender. It is because he builds castles in the air that we dwell in houses on the earth. It is because he lives in *the-land-that-never-was* that we live in *the-land-that-really-is*. Our houses of brick and stone were once his houses of vision and dream; and it is only because he saw them dreaming

that we see them waking. Silly people laugh at fancy, but fancy is the web out of which fact is always woven. Thoughtless people scoff at Fairyland; but Fairyland always leads the fashion. What they do in Fairyland one day, they do in every other land the next. That is the philosophy of architecture.

Fairyland, I say, was Stanley Charlton's birthplace. Every architect worth his salt was born in Fairyland, and has lived in the spirit of his birthplace ever since. The one always reminds you of the other. You cannot think of the architect without thinking of Fairyland; you cannot think of Fairyland without gratefully remembering that there the architect was born. How do I know? Easily enough. The architect is the one man on the face of the earth who preserves something of the imagination of his childhood; and where does imagination come from if not from Fairyland? Mr. Chesterton, I am glad to find, is a great believer in fairies and architects—for the two must necessarily go together. In one of his books he has an essay running into forty pages in which he argues that fairy-tales are the most natural, the most credible, and the most profitable of all stories. 'My first and last philosophy,' he says, 'the philosophy which I believe with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery. The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy-tales. They seem to me the entirely reasonable things.

Fairyland is nothing but the sunny country of common sense.' His idea seems to be that fairy-tales, more than anything else, prepare the mind for that subtle element of mystery that lurks everywhere in life, and for that inexorable chain of causes and consequences that confronts us at every turn. And, after all, Mr. Chesterton points out, there is really nothing more incredible on the face of it in the turning of a bear into a fairy prince than in the turning of an egg into a chicken. Indeed, he rather cruelly adds, no egg in itself suggests a chicken, whilst some princes do suggest bears! And, as to the law of cause and effect, the connexion between the blowing of the hero's horn and the fall of the ogre's castle is really no more remote than the connexion between the movements of a wireless operator on a sinking ship and the response of great liners hundreds of miles away. Mr. Chesterton feels that the world is crammed with just such things as happen in fairy-tales, and is, in fact, becoming more like Fairyland every day. He assures us that, before he could speak plainly, he had gleaned from the fairy-tales of his nursery a philosophy of life which has been ratified in every particular by the acts of subsequent experience, and which will still be of value to him when he can no longer hold a pen. 'I left the fairy-tales,' he says, 'lying on the nursery floor, and I have not found any books so sensible since.' Nor does Mr. Chesterton stand alone. 'Think what you would have been now,' writes Southey to Coleridge, 'if,

instead of being fed with fairy-tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history!' In that event the soul of the poet would have been stillborn, and the world would never have heard the story of the Ancient Mariner.

We are running short of architects. And why? Simply because the volume that Mr. Chesterton left lying on the nursery floor is lying there still. We must pick it up or the species will become extinct. When I say that we are running short of architects, I do not refer exclusively, of course, to architects who dream about houses. Are houses the only things worth building, and, therefore, worth dreaming about? Is there not scope for architecture, scope for imagination, in the building of an empire? And, if Mr. H. G. Wells is to be believed, we are wofully short of architects in this department. We build an empire as we would build a chicken-run, without any clear design, without any precise plan, without any fine flight of fancy. We blindly feel our way as we go along. In his *New Machiavelli,* Mr. Wells scathingly satirizes the modern politician. Everybody, he says, is an 'anti.' He is against something, if not against everything. 'I would listen,' he makes his hero say, 'to a stormy sea of babblement and try to extract some constructive intimations. But it was clear that they were all *against.* They were against the lords, against plutocrats, against Cossington's newspapers, against

the brewers. It was tremendously clear what they were against; the trouble was to find out what on earth they were *for*.' He proceeds to analyse the reason for this bewildering tangle of negations, denials, and antagonisms. Why is it so easy to say, 'Let us condemn!' and so hard to say, 'Let us do!' Mr. Wells believes that it is because constructive statesmanship calls for the exercise of a creative imagination, and few have been accustomed to respond to that call.

No, no; houses are not the only things worth dreaming about. What about the building of character? Is that worthy of no dreams? Are we to build character as we build chicken-runs—feeling our way as we go along? Sir Arthur Quiller Couch thinks that this is the weakness of the schools. So few schoolmasters were born in Fairyland; so few are architects. The average teacher, he maintains, is too keen on getting his pupils to memorize things. 'Education,' he complains, 'is all teach—teach—teach! Whenever I visit an elementary school—and I have visited scores—always I am prepared to find it a bad school when in the distance I hear the teacher's voice uplifted, persistent, drumming his opinions of this, that, or the other.' Sir Arthur thinks that the schoolmaster would be more profitably employed in quickening and stimulating a child's natural gift of imagination. Memory, he argues, is a poor thing to a child compared with imagination. Awaken his fancy, and he will think

and read for himself; and 'a child who can read alone in a window-seat or a chimney-corner has the key of all the gates.' But, instead of this, Sir Arthur complains, the teachers exhaust themselves by talking to him, talking at him, talking him silly, and talking themselves to death in the pitiless process. Every teacher should spend his holidays in Fairyland; he should develop an imagination; he should become an architect.

But the statesman and the schoolmaster do not stand alone. We need not confine our attention to the forum and the college. We must *all* visit Fairyland; we must *all* become architects. In no department of life can the unimaginative man excel. What is the explorer but a man who imagines lands that have never been seen, and who sets out to find them? It is usual to say that Columbus crossed the Atlantic in order to discover America; but is it not nearer the truth to say that he sailed so bravely and persistently westward because, by a fine flight of fancy, he had *already* discovered America? Or, take some of those avocations in which it might be supposed that the imagination should be rigorously suppressed. What is the historian? May the historian imagine things? Mr. Chesterton recently declared that nobody needs imagination more. He instances Carlyle, to whom he attributes 'a real power of seeing things suddenly. He saw the crowd of the new States-General; he saw Danton with his rude, flattened face; he saw Robespierre peering

mistily through his spectacles; he saw the English charge at Dunbar.' Or what of the soldier? May a general or an admiral imagine things? But was it not said of Nelson that he was always victorious because of his uncanny facility for projecting himself into the mind of his enemy, and thus anticipating his every movement? Or what of the judge? At first blush, it might be confidently affirmed that here, at least, we must be saved from any imaginative flights. Yet, in his *Life of Sir Frank Lockwood,* the most popular Solicitor-General that England ever had, Mr. Augustine Birrell declares that 'brutal judges are usually unimaginative men who dole out sentences as if they were selling tape by the yard.' And in dealing with the days in which Sir Frank was Recorder of Sheffield, he eulogises him as essentially an imaginative judge. Mr. Birrell is plainly an admirer of his hero for having said that 'he could not imagine any circumstance in connection with the stealing of a shawl that would justify a magistrate in taking seven years off a man's life.'

As I breathed last evening the delightful atmosphere of Stanley Charlton's home, I could see that Stanley did not exhaust his imagination upon his business. He recognizes that every man is the architect of somebody else's gladness. Fancy an unimaginative father or an unimaginative husband! Ian Maclaren devotes one of his most telling stories to the tragedy to which such a state of things may

lead. Edward Trevor is a brilliant barrister who is carrying all before him. He is rapidly forging his way to fame and fortune and high honour. He goes for his holiday to the Riviera. His frail and beautiful wife, to whom he is devotedly attached, is compelled to remain at home, nursing a sick child. He has a delightful time in Italy, and the enjoyment of his tour is greatly enhanced by the charming love-letters he receives from home. 'We have a map of the Riviera,' she says, in one of them, 'and found out all the places you have visited in the yacht; and we tried to imagine you sailing on that azure sea and landing among those silver olives.' There is, however, one sentence that brings a shadow to his face. 'I was just one little bit disappointed,' she confesses, 'not to get a letter; you see what an exacting little wife you have! I waited for every post and Bertie said, "Has father's letter come yet?" When one is on holiday, writing letters is an awful bore; but please just a line to Bertie and me!' Oh, that letter! He began it ten days ago; but there was always something to interrupt him; and it had never been finished. Next day he was sitting in the pretty garden in front of the hotel, gazing on a vision of blue set in the fronds of a palm, and listening to the song of the fishers as it floated across the bay. And then—a telegram! The dream was shattered. An hour later he was in the Paris express; and for the next thirty hours he prayed one petition, that she might live till he arrived. How the train

crawled! How slow the boat seemed! How slow everything and everybody seemed! When he reached home, she was dead. The distinguished doctors who had been called in told him the whole story. It was to the effect that she had died with his photograph on the pillow, holding in her hands the last flowers he had given her, and—*longing for his letter*!

'We could have deceived her,' the doctor said, 'but she knew the hour of the Continental mails and could detect the postman's ring. Once a letter came, and she insisted upon seeing it in case of any mistake. But it was only an invitation for you. It can't be helped now, and you ought not to vex yourself; but I believe a letter would have done more for her than—but what am I saying?'

She had written a last letter to him and ordered it to be placed in her dead hand that he might receive it directly from herself.

He went to her room, read it, and flung himself down by the bedside in an agony of repentance. Oh, that unfinished letter!

'If I had only known!' he cried, 'and now it is too late, too late!'

And Ian Maclaren concludes the touching story with these telling words: 'For we sin against our dearest,' he says, 'not because we do not *love*, but because we do not *imagine*!'

'I can easily imagine——!' observed Stanley Charlton last night.

'We do not imagine!' says Ian Maclaren.

We sin against our dearest because we do not imagine! I cannot help thinking that it is for the same reason that we sin against God.

PART III

I

THE OFFING

I

FEW places are more cheerlessly and defiantly inhospitable than the deck of a steamship on a damp, raw winter's morning. Everything is dripping wet and icy cold and aggressively uninviting. As you finish your toilet in the cabin, you heroically promise yourself a turn or two up and down the promenade before breakfast. But, when it comes to it, your heart fails you. You cautiously open the door; put out your head; feel the sting of the blast and the splash of the spray; shiver; and return to the shelter of the saloon. But on this particular morning, in spite of the bleak and biting conditions, the promenade deck presented a scene of extraordinary animation. On its port side, at least, it was crowded. Men with scarves about their ears and with the collars of their overcoats turned up, and women snugly enveloped in furs and mufflers, paced up and down, chattering merrily. They were, I say, all on the port side. Moreover, a close observer would have noticed that their eyes, instead of being straight before them, as is usually the case when the vessel is in mid-ocean, were fastened upon some object or objects away on the horizon. Every now and again each little group would pause, lean over the railing,

and take fresh observations. For, after eighteen days at sea, we were within sight of land; it was the end of the long voyage; in a few hours we expected to be ashore. As we drew nearer, however, the thin haze of the early morning developed into a drifting mist; and, nearer still, the drifting mist thickened into an impenetrable fog. We slowed down; the engines stopped; and I imagined that we were about to anchor. To my surprise, however, the engines started again; the ship swung round; and we steamed straight out to sea. I spoke to the captain about it afterwards.

'I didn't fancy lying there in the fog,' he replied. 'It's a very risky anchorage; there are islands all round you; coastal steamers are dashing to and fro. In my opinion there are only two safe places for a ship like this; one is the harbour and the other is the open sea. I don't like tossing about in the offing.'

We kept to the deep waters till the fog lifted, and then slipped through the heads into port. And then, what excitement and confusion! What greetings and farewells! In an hour's time we who, for weeks, had been shut up to each other's society, were scattered to the four winds of heaven, never to meet again.

II

This all happened many years ago; but the captain's words about the offing came back to me this

morning. After breakfast, the Bible was placed before me, and, in the course of family worship, I read a few verses from the Sermon on the Mount. It happened to be the passage—one of the loveliest in literature—about the ravens and the lilies and the Father's care for His own. The words never fail to hold the attention; but this morning I received unusual evidence of their power to interest and excite. I was startled by an interjection!

'Seek not ye what ye shall eat,' I read, *'nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.'*

'What's that mean?' broke in a boyish voice.

The sweet simplicities about the grass of the field and the fowls of the air had been followed so intently, and this emergence of the obscure had occurred so suddenly, that the question had slipped out almost involuntarily.

'Neither be ye of doubtful mind.'

'What does that mean?'

I had to confess that I was not quite sure as to the exact significance of the words that had puzzled him; but I promised to go into the matter and answer the question to-morrow. I have been into the matter. As soon as I attained the seclusion of my study I reached down several translations and threw myself into the armchair by the fire to consult them.

'Neither be ye of doubtful mind!' says the Authorized Version.

'Neither be ye of doubtful mind!' echoes the Revised.

'Be not worried!' Dr. Moffatt suggests.

'Do not waver between hope and fear!' says Dr. Weymouth's version.

'Be not tossed about in the offing!' reads Dr. Cox's translation. And, as I read the words, my old experience outside the New Zealand port came rushing back upon me. 'Jesus bade His disciples,' says Dr. Cox, in commenting upon his own rendering of the words, 'Jesus bade His disciples sail into the tranquil haven of an assured trust in God, instead of casting out their anchors into the wide perilous sea of care.'

Armed with this information, I fancy that I shall to-morrow morning not only satisfy the pardonable curiosity of my boyish questioner, but, by adding still another picture to the gallery that already contains the ravens and the lilies, I shall give him something fresh to think about. A boy loves the grass of the field and the birds of the air; but he loves the ships of the sea even more. And I can see his eyes sparkle even now as I pass on to him Dr. Cox's elucidation of his problem, illustrated by my own experience in New Zealand.

III

If he is as interested as I expect him to be, I may tell him the famous story of the way in which the *Calliope* was saved during the hurricane at Samoa in

1889. Thirteen vessels rode at anchor off Samoa when the storm burst. In its grip they were like toys in the hands of an infuriated giant. Anchors were dragging everywhere; the ships were being tossed against each other and against the rocks on the shore in the most helpless and terrible way. It was then that Captain Kane, of the *Calliope,* took his historic resolution. He made up his mind to put out to sea!

Into the teeth of the roaring blast the *Calliope* must sail,
She has straightway slipped her cables and has turned to meet the gale.
She hangs for a moment doubtful when she finds herself set free,
Then crawls, with slow unwilling gait, out to the open sea!

The message flashed to the engineroom, 'More steam! Full steam ahead!'
And the engineer smiled grimly, for already the steel glowed red.
But the throb of the madly-whirring screw beat faster thud on thud,
As it bit the breast of the curling seas and battled against the flood.

Inch by inch the gallant ship fought her way round the reef, past the wreckage of the other ships, and out into deep water. The men on the decks of the broken vessels cheered the *Calliope* as she slowly passed.

Into the west the sun went down when the wind had sunk
to rest,
But he looked no more on the thirteen ships afloat on the
harbour's breast;
For out of them all there was only one that had braved the
tempest's breath;
And, save the *Calliope,* every ship lay locked in the jaws
of death!

It is the most impressive example that history can furnish of the perils of the offing; and I shall be disappointed if my young questioner does not listen with eyes wide open to this stirring and dramatic tale.

IV

Danger always lurks upon the fringe of things. The offing is on the fringe of the harbour and on the fringe of the ocean; it is neither the one nor the other; and, because it is neither the one nor the other, it is a particularly perilous place. I cannot shake from my mind the memory of an experience that once befell me in the course of my afternoon visiting. Lassie and Freda Harvey were for some years members of our Social Study Circle. They were most charming and delightful girls and were deservedly popular. Lassie, especially, had a fine voice and was one of our favourite soloists. Their father died when they were very young; and their mother only occasionally came with the girls to the church. After awhile we noticed certain telltale

symptoms in Lassie. A delicacy, almost amounting to transparency, spread itself over her complexion. She was troubled with a nasty and persistent cough. Her eyes sparkled, and, on the slightest provocation, her cheeks flushed. Her attendance became irregular; and, after a month or two, she gave up coming altogether. I sometimes called at Torrington Lodge, but only on rare occasions was I invited to the sick-room. It was a beautiful home standing well back from the road and surrounded by shrubberies and well-trimmed lawns. Whenever I called, I was shown by the maid into the drawing-room, and, after a few minutes, Mrs. Harvey, a handsome queenly woman, beautifully dressed, would enter the room. She was the soul of kindness and the essence of courtesy. She made me feel that she was glad that I had come; and no hostess can do more. She enquired with the most careful solicitude about each member of my family; she talked about the weather; she had something interesting to say about passing events; she discussed many matters of personal and social interest. After a quarter of an hour or so, the easy current of her pleasant conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the maid, bringing in the afternoon tea. Mrs. Harvey was manifestly anxious that everything should be exactly to my liking. It was all so nicely done, and yet nothing was overdone. Everything that she said and did was in excellent taste; no hostess could have been more considerate, more attentive, more viva-

cious, more charming. I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself for feeling dissatisfied.

Yet I *was* dissatisfied. I thought of Lassie upstairs, fighting life's last grim battle. And as I thought of her, our gossip over the teacups seemed to savour of artificiality. Lassie was facing the great realities whilst we were toying with the merest trifles. We were among the shallows whilst the deeps were calling. We were only on the fringe of things. I remembered that on several previous occasions I had left Torrington Lodge feeling utterly dejected and miserable. Then, as now, I had enjoyed a most delightful conversation and a most delicious afternoon tea; but, after all, was it for talk and tea that I had visited the house? After each of those previous visits I felt, as I closed the gate and strode down the street, that I had been tossing in the offing and had never entered the harbour at all! With these painful recollections in mind I determined that, on this occasion at any rate, my conscience should have no such ground for accusation. I waited my chance and it was not long in coming. I rose as if to go. Then, approaching her and looking her full in the face, I said, as gently as possible:

'And so, Mrs. Harvey, I suppose we must make up our minds that poor Lassie is dying of consumption.'

For a fraction of a second she looked as though I had struck her, as indeed I had. She resumed her

seat and I did the same. I gave her time to recover from the blow.

'Do you really think so?' she asked. I answered her question by asking another.

'Don't *you*?' I said.

She covered her face with her hands for a moment, and then, recovering her voice, she said:

'That, I suppose, is what the doctors mean by the hints that they give; but, oh, I have tried so hard not to think it. This is the first time that it has ever been mentioned.'

And then, opening her heart to me, she told me that it was in consumption that her husband had died.

'And since Lassie took to her bed,' she added, 'I have looked full into Freda's face first thing every morning to make sure that there was no sign of it there!'

I could scarcely recognize in the overflowing mother-soul before me the gay, vivacious creature I had seen so often. We were among realities at last! I said a few things that would, I knew, soothe and strengthen her, and then, a second time, rose to go.

'You would like me to pray with you before I leave, Mrs. Harvey?' I said.

'I should indeed!' she replied with fervour.

In a very few words, and those of the simplest, I committed her—and Lassie—and Freda—each separately to the Father's care.

'Oh, this has been a comfort!' she exclaimed, as she pressed my hand in parting. 'I feel as if the weight of the world had been lifted from my mind!'

And I, in my turn, felt that I was no longer tossing about in the offing; but that at last, at last, I had reached the haven of my desire.

V

I feel very grateful to my little questioner for having dared to interject this morning. His interrogation has opened up a profitable study. We are all of us too prone to linger on the fringe of things. We are content to toss about in the offing.

At the Social Study Circle to which I have already referred we had, every now and again, a literary evening. On these occasions Orlando Jackson was always in great form. He could talk about books as long as anyone could be found to listen. He had, one would suppose, read everything; yet he was only a boy! It soon became evident, however, that he had not really read the books. His speeches consisted of hasty impressions of his own, augmented by snippets from the reviews and echoes of other people's judgments. He had only seen the port from the offing.

After the meeting last night I joined a little knot of lingerers who seemed loth to leave. They were talking about Frank Keen. I soon discovered that they, too, were only on the fringe of things. I know Frank intimately; and I know from happy experi-

ence that the things of which they made so much are the little mannerisms and eccentricities that you scarcely notice when you enjoy his confidence and friendship. You see his oddities from the offing; you forget them as soon as you enter port.

The *Brimbletown Courier* devoted its leading article on Saturday to a criticism of the Church. It was well informed; it was sympathetic; and, on the whole, it was just. And yet, somehow, I felt that the writer was only on the fringe of things. You cannot judge the Church from the outside. The man who looked up at the Temple from the outer gate saw only a mass of frowning stone; but he who stood amidst the silence of the Holiest of All saw nothing but the finest gold. The true view is from within.

At a public commemoration the other day I heard a prominent statesman refer to Jesus Christ. I almost wished that he had left the words unuttered. He was appreciative; he was eulogistic; he was patronizing! He referred to the social ideals of Jesus; the ethical teachings of Jesus; the moral influence of Jesus. There was nothing of which I could complain, nothing that I could resent. And yet, somehow, it grated on my ear. I felt that he was tossing about in the offing; I wished that he would enter port.

VI

The greatest day of John Wesley's life was the

day on which he discovered that, though 'not very far from the Kingdom of God,' he was nevertheless only on the fringe of things. That very day he left the turbulent offing and entered into the rest of the haven. In *Eben Holden,* Irving Bacheller tells the story of a boy who ran away to sea. But he could not stay away. The lure of the old home was too much for him. After a long voyage he crept back through the woods to peep at it. 'It was beautiful,' he says, 'the scent of the new hay that stood in cocks and winrows on the hill, the noise of the crickets, the smell of the grain, the old house, just as I remembered them; just as I had dreamed of them a thousand times.' The dog—the dog that had been *his* dog—crept up to him and licked his hand. 'I stole up to the house and looked in at the window. There sat father, at a table, reading his paper; and little Hope was on her knees by mother saying her prayers.' He could not muster up courage to go in, and yet he could not tear himself away. He found a cave in the woods and made it his home, only creeping out under cover of the darkness to get fish from the brook or game from the forest.

Here was the prodigal living within sight of the father's house; always on the fringe of things; tossing about in the offing!

But one Christmas night a thing happened which, Irving Bacheller says, he is powerless to describe. 'It was so full of happiness that every day of our lives since then has been blessed with it, and with a

peace that has lightened every sorrow; of it I can truly say that it passeth understanding.' And the book closes with the wanderer sitting between his father and his mother, holding a hand of each.

The offing is very near the port, but between the offing and the port there is all the difference in the world.

'Be not tossed about in the offing!' said Jesus.

'What does that mean?' asked my boyish questioner this morning.

It means much—very much—for all of us.

II

JED SMITH

I

We called him Jed Smith long before we discovered his real name; and, by that time, our pseudonym had become so firmly rooted in our minds that we found it impossible to displace it. The photographs upon his wall—as I observed afterwards—showed that, in his earlier days, he had been a man of middle height and stalwart proportions, but rheumatism had played such havoc with his frame that, when I knew him, his bent form gave you the impression that he must always have been stunted and short. He came out to New Zealand in one of the first emigrant ships; had done reasonably well; and, in my time, was spending his declining years in modest comfort. His wife, whose acquaintance he made on the voyage out, and whom he had married on arrival, had died some years before I myself settled in Mosgiel; and Jed dwelt in a trim little cottage of his own, well cared for by a widowed daughter. But the thing that struck me was that he was always doing something about the place. Either he was trimming the hedge, or mowing the lawn, or pottering about in the garden, or mending the fence or tinkering with the porch or the roof or the windows. He never seemed to be at rest. Sometimes you

would even find him out on the public footpath, pulling up a few weeds, cutting the grass and generally putting things shipshape. That is why we christened him Jed; for, in the record of Nehemiah, Jedaiah is commended for having *'repaired over against his own house.'* I forget why we called him Smith; perhaps because that name was at least as probable as any other. For several years he was Jed Smith to us, and it came as a shock when we learned that, long before we gave him that name, he had rejoiced in the possession of a very different one. But that is by the way.

II

I cannot imagine that I should ever have caught myself scribbling about my old friend had he not been something of a philosopher. Passing his cottage one afternoon when his roses were at their best, I found him busily engaged in some repairs to the gatepost. He had removed the gate bodily. It was standing on the footpath, leaning against the palings. Screw-driver in hand, Jed was adjusting one of the hinges. Having commented on the weather and felicitated him on the luxurious magnificence of his roses, I ventured to remark that he always seemed to find something to do. He laid his screw-driver on the flat top of the gatepost and laughed.

'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'that's what Maggie there' —with a nod towards the house—'is always a-telling me. But what I says is this; there's only

four sorts o' things in the world and only one of them is any business o' mine, so I may as well look after that one well. There's *the things that never get out o' repair*; I needn't worry my old head about them. There's *the things that can't be repaired*; it ain't any good frettin' about them. There's *the things that, if they get a fair chance, will repair themselves*; it ain't for me to go a meddlin' with them. And there's *the things that'll go from bad to worse unless somebody repairs them; they're my business*!'

He rapped out those three words—'*they're—my —business!*'—as though he were hitting a nail sharply on the head; and then, chuckling merrily to himself, he seized the screw-driver and continued his tussle with the obstinate hinge. I thanked him for having given me something to think about, and, having begged a delicate cream rosebud for a button-hole, continued my stroll.

III

About half a mile beyond Jed Smith's cottage, the road in which he lives joins the main road running from Silverstream to Mosgiel. There is a milestone at the corner, although it is almost buried in the long grass under the hedge. Charmed by the song of the birds in the overhanging hawthorn, and by the drowsy murmur of the Silverstream near by, I sat down on the grassy bank to rest for a moment, and, incidentally, to meditate on Jed's philosophy. But

the meditation was a failure. My thoughts were soon fastened on the rabbits as, darting to and fro across the road, they insisted on playing peep-bo with me as they crouched behind the taller wisps of grass, sat erect in the dry ditch, or hid beneath the shelter of the leafy hedge. Presently, however, the spell was broken by the rattle of wheels. The rabbits vanished and I rose to go. But as the spring-cart came round the bend of the road I recognized John Broadbanks. He had driven over to Mosgiel to make a few purchases and was on his way home. I told him of my adventure with Jed Smith.

'Yes,' he replied, after pondering the matter for a moment, 'I have often thought of that. It's very wonderful, when you come to think of it, that the biggest and best things—the things that could not be mended if they failed us—never get out of repair. The masterly mechanism of the universe—the rising and the setting of the sun, the persistence in their orbits of the stars, the phases of the moon, the revolution of the earth, the cycle of the seasons, the round of the year, the exact adjustment of sunshine to rainfall, of heat to cold and of storm to calm—all this machinery, which must of necessity be extremely complicated, keeps in repair year in and year out, age after age. It is never overhauled or lubricated, yet it never gets out of gear. If a bolt flew out or a crank got jammed, it would be the end of all of us. It would be like the fall of Humpty-Dumpty; all the king's horses and all the king's men

could never get the thing started again. There are no engineers, on this planet or on any other, capable of effecting such repairs if the need arose. But, really, the amazing thing is that the need never arises; as your old friend so truly observed, the biggest and best things of all never get out of order.'

After we had chatted for a few more minutes, Brownie began to paw the ground impatiently; Gyp, having chased all the rabbits to their burrows, was clearly anxious to be off; John looked at his watch; I noticed that the sun was getting well down towards the hilltops; and, in two minutes, each was out of the other's sight.

IV

The sunset hour is peculiarly conducive to pensive thoughts. That, perhaps, accounts for the fact that, on my way home, I reflected on the *second* class of things of which old Jed had spoken. 'There's the *things,*' he said, *'that can't be repaired*; it ain't any good fretting about them!' I suppose not; and yet I confess that my thoughts that evening inclined towards sadness. When there is a crash in the kitchen, there is nothing to do but to sweep up the pieces; but it is not exhilarating work. Fretting, as Jed observes, will not mend matters; yet the housewife has never been born who could gaze with dry eyes and unclouded countenance upon the scattered fragments of her choicest china.

Not, by any means, that broken china is the worst

of life's irreparable things. Here, before me, stands a copy of the Hon. John Collier's great painting, *A Fallen Idol.* Our idols fall; they are dashed to shivers; they lie in ruins at our feet; they can never be lifted to their pedestals again. What then? Jed says that it is no good fretting. Yet I should be sorry to number among my friends a man who could face such a tragedy without emotion. There are few objects more bleak, more cheerless, more utterly depressing than those vacant pedestals from which our idols have fallen. Here, if anywhere, is sorrow's crown of sorrow. The empty pedestal is the outward and visible emblem of an empty and an aching heart. It is all very well for old Jed, working away with his screw-driver under the arch of roses at the gate, to say that we are to shed no tears over the irreparable. If we are not to fret over the crash in the kitchen or over the still more terrible disaster in the soul, what *are* we to do? Poor old Jed lies sleeping in his quiet grave or I should like to have asked him that question. But I fancy I can guess fairly accurately the tenour of the reply he would have given.

I was chatting the other day with a Jewish rabbi. We were exchanging experiences and somehow the conversation drifted round to the marriage service.

'I have heard,' I said, 'that, at a Jewish wedding, a wine-glass is broken as part of the symbolism of the ceremony. Is that a fact?'

'Of course it is,' he replied. 'We hold aloft a

wine-glass; let it fall and be shivered to atoms; and then, pointing to its fragments, we exhort the young couple to jealously guard the sacred relationship into which they have entered, since, once it is broken, it can never be restored.'

Had I pressed him, old Jed would, I think, have favoured me with a very similar philosophy. The logic of the irreparable lies along that line. Prevention is always possible; cure there is none.

V

'Then,' he said, as he continued his dissection of the universe, taking it to pieces as easily as though it had been an armchair or a window-frame, 'then there's *the things that, if they get a fair chance, will repair themselves;* it an't for me to go a-meddlin' with them!' In some respects these things are the most astonishing of all. Had Jed been born a few years earlier, and been educated for the medical profession, he might have anticipated the epoch-making discoveries of Lord Lister. Forsaking for the nonce the technical and academic phraseology of the schools, what does the antiseptic doctrine amount to? Reduced to ordinary parlance it simply means that, towards the close of the last century, the medical fraternity awoke to a realisation of the fact that, favourable conditions having been secured, most things will right themselves. That being so, it is the supreme business of the doctor to secure those favourable conditions. The surgeon knows

now that it is not for him to heal the wound; the wound must heal itself; his duty is to keep it so clean from foreign substances and from malignant bacteria that the injured limb gets a fair chance of establishing its own restoration.

The same is true of disorders of another kind. In cases for which, a few years ago, the doctor would have prescribed drugs, he now orders the patient away for a change. He knows that it is not within the power of any physician to repair damaged tissues and shattered nerves. He sees that, as long as the sufferer is subjected to the toil and moil, the stress and strain, that have precipitated the collapse, his system is not getting a fair chance of righting itself. So he orders him away from the old sights and the old sounds, the old worries and the old cares. The patient slips off to the mountains or the beach; and, in a few weeks, returns to his old haunts with nerves as steady as steel. He looks his old troubles in the face and is astonished that he ever allowed such trifles to depress him. The whole trend of medical science during the past fifty years has been towards a more confident reliance upon those amazing potentialities of recuperation with which Nature herself is invested. Science has come round to Jed's opinion that these things, if they get a fair chance, will repair themselves.

VI

'They're my business!' cried old Jed as he spoke

of *the things that will go from bad to worse unless somebody repairs them.* They are everybody's business. Half the art of life lies in keeping those things in repair that threaten to go to decay.

I was glad to see in old Jed's garden such a glorious riot of roses. He may not have known that his rose-growing was part of his repair; but it was. Every year a fresh onslaught is made on the beauty of the world. We take some idyllic scene and fill it with roaring furnaces and huge chimneys that soon mask the neighbourhood in smoke. In almost every large town there are old people who will take you to some coign of vantage in the vicinity, and contrast the black and murky outlook upon which you gaze with the same scene as it presented itself to their eyes in the days of their childhood. It was then a wooded dell, through the heart of which a clear and silvery trout-stream babbled on its pleasant way. The green great branches around were the home of every species of bird, and the forest was choral with their song. The ground beside the stream, and up the hill, was carpeted with wild flowers of delicate perfume and of every hue. But everything has changed. The air is heavy with smoke; the stream, no longer alive with trout, is muddy and foul; the flowers and the birds have vanished; and the trees that remain can scarcely struggle into leaf. There is nothing about the transformation to be really regretted. We made our bargain with Nature, and we paid our price. It

would be an affectation to pretend that the transaction was not on the whole a remunerative one. We cannot be expected to block the path of progress in order to keep the blue bells on the hillside and the primroses in the valley. But it is as well that we should recognize frankly that civilisation is very often the sworn foe of the beautiful. It is every man's duty to do something towards repairing the inevitable damage; and when, like old Jed, a man turns a wilderness of scrub into a garden of fragrant and many-tinted roses, he has earned the benediction of mankind.

Our friendships, too. 'I will tell you in six words what the Whitefriars Club is,' said the Prior, Sir Robert Hudson, in a speech that he delivered at a dinner, given under the auspices of the club, at the Café Royal, some time ago. 'It is a brotherhood for keeping friendships in repair. And as men grow older they learn that that is one of the great and primary duties of life.' I am not a member of the Whitefriars Club; but I would gladly associate myself with any institution in the world that would help me to keep my friendships in repair. Life knows no wealthier enrichment than the enrichment represented by the linking of other lives with our own. We are made for each other; we become part of each other; and life becomes like a flower in full bloom when soul responds to soul. But, like most rare and precious things, this treasure is exceedingly fragile. It is perilously easy to misconstrue, to

misinterpret, to misunderstand. No pathos is more common.

> Not understood! How trifles often change us!
> The thoughtless sentence or the fancied slight
> Destroy long years of friendship and estrange us,
> And on our hearts there falls a freezing blight—
> Not understood!

The repairs, in such cases, are very difficult to effect. They can only be undertaken by deft and skilful workmen. Old Jed was clever enough with his hammer, his gimlet, his screw-driver and his awl. But there are repairs that can only be effected with honest looks, warm handclasps, and tactful words. The man who has learned how to keep his friendships in perfect repair is a very wise workman indeed.

Nor does the loftiest friendship of all lie beyond the danger-zone. It, too, is easily fractured. Towards *HIM,* trifles often change us; from *HIM* a thousand things estrange us. We form other ties and soon forget; we drift away without intending so to do. The heart gets out of gear; the delicately adjusted faculties of the inner life refuse to work; the soul falls into ruin and decay.

The crisis in one of Florence Barclay's best books is reached when the hero—Rodney Steele—gazes upon a picture that hangs in a little church in an English fishing village. The painting represents an old ruin, ivy-covered, useless and desolate, standing

out jagged and roofless against a purple sky. Inscribed upon the picture are these lines:

> The ruins of my soul repair,
> And make my heart a house of prayer.

'There's things that'll go from bad to worse unless somebody repairs them,' said old Jed, *'and that's my business*!'

He rapped out the words so emphatically that I could not think of contradicting him; yet, as I look back upon the incident, it seems clear as noonday that, in the righting of things that have gone wrong, old Jed was never intended to enjoy a monopoly.

III

A WEDDING IN THE WILDS

He was a perfect stranger, but as I watched him pass the study window I felt certain of two things. I knew that he had come from the country, and I knew that he wished to be married. Had I been asked to state my reasons for either of these convictions I should have found the task too difficult for me. Yet is it not invariably true that the things of which we are most certain are the very things that we find incapable of demonstration? And so I opened the door to my visitor with no doubt in my mind as to his circumstances or as to his business. In neither respect was I mistaken. Everything about him convinced me that my second conjecture, at any rate, was above suspicion. His peculiar willingness to converse awkwardly on any imaginable subject—save only the one that had brought him to the manse—placed that matter beyond all possible question. I determined to assist him.

'You wish me to help you?' I suggested.

'Yes,' he answered, in an embarrassed and hesitating fashion. I saw that I must go the whole way.

'Do I understand that you are about to be married?' I hazarded.

His look of inexpressible relief told me that he

regarded me in the light of a friend and a benefactor. His chains were broken. I took down my register in a businesslike way, and plied him for particulars. Having gratified the insatiable inquisitiveness of the official documents concerning Thomas Mackenzie, bachelor, and Caroline Inglis, spinster, I returned the papers to the shelf and asked my visitor how I was to reach the scene of the wedding.

'Well,' he replied, 'it's a bit difficult. You'll have to take the express to Balclutha. There you'll find a local train waiting on the branch line. Take it as far as it goes. At the terminus at Owaka you will find a spring-cart waiting for you. And somebody will be ready, at each stage of the journey, to take you on.'

What could be more simple? I cheerfully assured him that the happy day should find me on the spot; and he departed.

That happy day arrived, and I faced my journey with a light heart. The light heart left me, however, when I entered the second train. For there I found an old resident of the district who, on learning of my destination, seriously doubted the possibility of getting there and back in one day! My brow instantly clouded. But, on stepping from the train at the terminus, I was saluted by two young gentlemen in suits of faultless black, wearing ties of immaculate white, and gaily adorned with buttonholes of a distinctly festive kind. They conducted

me to a spring-cart which, despite the most diligent scraping and scrubbing, had stubbornly refused to appear jaunty or gay. We drove for miles through scenery of enchanting loveliness. The blood-red rata and the snowy lawyer-blossom mingled gracefully with the pendant fuchsia and the tangling convolvulus. The vast hillsides were gloriously draped in the most wealthy profusion of green. It was a perfect riot of radiant forestry. On we drove through the dense bush solitudes, the rabbits scurrying off to right and left, whilst the tuis and the bell-birds flooded the valleys with their wild and liquid melodies. At last we came to the river and drew rein.

'What now!' I inquired, in perplexity.

'Oh, there's the boat,' my driver casually remarked, and pointed to a dinghy tied to a stump at the water's edge. There could be no doubt as to his meaning; so, whilst my companions unyoked and tethered the horse, I sauntered down to the stream. What a journey followed! Not a sound but the plash of the oars and the song of the birds! The great over-arching trees, perfectly mirrored in the tranquil depths of the stream, produced an effect that was like fairyland. The boat seemed to be suspended in mid-air, the circle of verdure enveloping us above and below. After an hour of such delightful voyaging my companions suddenly ran the boat ashore.

'And now——?' I inquired.

'Now we must take to the bush!'

Into the bush we accordingly plunged. Under normal conditions it would have been a most delightful walk; but I did not enjoy it. For by this time three haunting apprehensions began to torture me. In the first place, I knew that, to be legal, the marriage ceremony must be concluded by four o'clock, and my watch warned me that that hour was fast approaching. In the second place, the memory of my breakfast was becoming less and less satisfying. But the third terror was the worst. For the prospects of my return journey were suggesting possibilities that became every moment more alarming. I could understand that motives of his own might lead my eager bridegroom to arrange, with the most beautiful accuracy, all these interesting connections at the various stages of my *outward* trip. But I caught myself wondering whether the same admirable precision would characterize my *second* journey. Moreover, it was perfectly certain that if, at that moment, I had turned my face towards home, I should have been too late for the last train that night! The nearest telegraph office was miles and miles away, and I thought of a lonely watcher at the manse!

Suddenly we burst upon a homestead surrounded by tents and marquees; it might easily have been mistaken for a military encampment. Everything was in readiness. There were scores of guests. The bride's mother explained apologetically that it was

the first wedding that had ever been celebrated in the vicinity, and that some of the settlers had travelled from immense distances to witness it. I was taken into the great farm kitchen. It had been decorated with gum-leaves. A little table, surmounted by a Bible, stood at the far end. The people crowded in, and, on that summer's afternoon, the atmosphere quickly became suffocating. I suggested to the lady of the house that the ceremony should take place in the open air. The two companions of my travel volunteered to help me select a spot. In three minutes we found a place that Nature seemed to have specially designed for us. A narrow track led to a great circular clearing in the bush. In the centre stood an immense flat stump which made an ideal reading desk. The guests repaired thither at once. The idyllic scene is indelibly photographed upon my memory. The deep blue sky overhead; the infinite varieties and shades of green on every hand thrown into gorgeous relief by the gloomy recesses of the virgin forest behind; the splashes of brilliant colour provided by the blossoms of the flowering shrubs; all this made up a setting which the white dresses of the girls brought to the most satisfying completion. It was a picture of bewitching loveliness. And when the bride—a girl of eighteen—came down the track leaning on her brother's arm, the wayward breezes toying with her veil, an effect was produced in which any artist would have found an inspiration.

The ceremony over, and the register duly signed, we adjourned to the large marquee for 'breakfast.' I was still thinking of that other breakfast that seemed so long ago! Yet, now that I was again seated at a table, I was bereft of appetite. The minister at a country wedding is expected to superintend everything. In arranging for other people's speeches, and in the preparation of my own, I lost all inclination to eat. I awoke, when it was too late to repair the omission, to a realization of the fact that the wedding breakfast had consisted, for me, of a couple of creampuffs! Having discharged the last of my responsibilities, I sought an interview with the bridegroom. I confided to him my apprehensions concerning the return journey, and found scant comfort in his bland assurance that he had never thought of that! He conferred with his bride. Later on he took me aside, and, pledging me to the most sacred confidence, whispered that the bride and he were 'going away' at nine o'clock. Instead of going by the river, they would drive through the bush to the nearest station—a journey that would occupy about two hours—and catch a late train to Balclutha, arriving there shortly after midnight. There would be no way by which I could continue my way to Mosgiel; but if I cared to accompany them to that point, they would be glad to take me. Seeing no other way of reaching home, I reluctantly accepted. The bridegroom warned me again that the hour of departure was a profound secret. I was

on no account to divulge it. A most ingenious code of signals was arranged by which I might know when to slip out. In due time the signal was given, and, leaving the company, I staggered out into the dark. The best man directed me to the cart. Bride and bridegroom were seated in front. I was to ride behind. I felt very much ashamed of myself for thus intruding on their privacy. But what could I do? It was a weird drive. I suppose the horse could see a track, but to me it seemed as though we were thridding the intricacies of the forest primeval. After journeying for some miles, I became aware that our pace was slackening. My companions were indulging in a good deal of whispering. Glancing over my shoulder, I caught sight of a little hut in front of us. It would have been invisible but for the light streaming from door and window. After further debate between those in front, we pulled up and the bride alighted. She was quickly swallowed up in the darkness. As soon as her form had vanished, the bridegroom turned to me and explained.

'Many years ago,' he said, 'her father and mother quarrelled and separated. Since then, the father has lived in the hut here, and has held no communication with any members of the family. Carrie can only just remember him. This is the first wedding in the family. Carrie knew that there would not have been a light in the hut at this time of night in the ordinary way, and she felt that she could not pass it.'

Even as he spoke, I saw, against the lighted doorway, the form of the bride approaching it; I saw the father rise to meet her; I saw the two, for one brief moment, in each other's arms. I doubt if anything was said; I heard no murmur of voices. The man came with her to the cart, helped her in; and shook the bridegroom's hand. I doubt if he saw me; the lamp over the wheel was shining full upon his face. But, by that same light, I saw the glint of moisture on the cheeks of both father and daughter. As we drove on, our poor little bride gave way to violent sobbing. And, until we were out of sight and sound, a burly form stood framed in the lighted doorway.

We reached the station just as the train steamed in. I assisted my bride and bridegroom into one carriage, and selected for myself another farther along the train. Here I found my companion of the morning, who expressed his surprise that I had succeeded in completing my journey. At Balclutha, whilst the bridegroom was attending to the luggage, I walked along to take farewell of the bride. I could see that, although her eyes were bright again, the tragedy of her mother's wedded life had cast a shadow on her own.

'If you are ever in our part of the country,' she said, 'you will come and see our home, won't you?'

'I most certainly shall,' I replied, 'although,' I added, looking full into her face, 'there is only one piece of furniture that I am particularly anxious to see in it!'

'Whatever's that!' she asked.

'An altar,' I replied.

'Carrie,' I continued, 'you're only a girl, and you have all your life before you. Take my advice and, when you and Tom find yourselves alone to-night, kneel down together even though you only say, *"O Lord, keep us true to each other and to Thee!"* Do it every day! You will be surprised at the way in which it will straighten and soften and sweeten everything!'

Tom came up to claim his bride, and I bade him good-night.

'Carrie and I have been talking secrets,' I said, 'but she'll tell you what I said if you ask her.'

That was the last I saw of them, the last I ever expect to see of them in this world. I found that a goods train was passing through Balclutha at about three in the morning. I obtained permission to travel in the guard's van, and reached home in time for breakfast. I had been absent exactly twenty-four hours, having subsisted during that period on a couple of creampuffs and a plentiful variety of experiences.

This all happened nearly five-and-twenty years ago. The other evening I was travelling on the Sydney express. The train stops for refreshments at Seymour. As I rose from the table and stepped out on the platform, a young girl approached and addressed me by name. She was a trim little figure of medium height, with rosy cheeks, twinkling eyes,

and a wealth of jet-black hair. She wore a closely-fitting dress of navy blue, and a cosy fur hung loosely about her shoulders.

'I am afraid,' I said, 'that you have the advantage of me.'

'Oh, I dare say,' she laughed. 'I come to church sometimes with Don Carstairs. I'm Carrie Mackenzie. You married my father and mother in the bush in New Zealand years ago. Do you remember?'

'Perfectly,' I replied.

'Mother often told us,' she went on, 'of what you said to her on her wedding night about the furniture. She took your advice; and, when I left New Zealand two years ago to come to Melbourne, she made me promise that, if ever I got married here, I would ask you to perform the ceremony; and,' she added with a blush, as the bell rang and she dashed off to her compartment, 'Don and I are coming along some evening to see you about it!'

IV

SHADOWS ON THE WALL

Oh, those shadows on the wall! How I dreaded them! How I hated them! Yet how I watched them! I slept, in those far-off days, in a cosy little bedroom at the head of a winding stair. After we little people had been tucked away for the night, our seniors—little dreaming of the terror that their movements inspired—crept stealthily up and down the stairs. They stole about on tiptoe; and the only indication I had of their approach was the rush of shadows across the wall—the shadows that were cast by the candles that they carried. Sometimes the shadows moved slowly, very slowly, like huge beasts prowling after their prey. At other times they swept swiftly across door and wall and ceiling, like hounds in full cry. Sometimes they leapt and danced and scampered in a revel of ghostly glee. Occasionally a candle would be left burning on the stand at the head of the stair; and the walls would be covered with great grim stationary shadows—shadows that stood still and stared at me. These were the worst of all. They were more bewildering, and, since they remained so long, gave greater scope for the play of my terrified fancy.

In the ceiling of the hall there was a trap-door

leading into an attic; this door usually stood open. One night I saw a wolf. It was standing in the attic with its head craned down through the hole in the ceiling, glaring fixedly at me. I lay, as it seemed, for hours, my eyes riveted upon the monster. When the tension became more than I could bear, I threw the clothes over my head, but only for a second. For, the moment I covered my face or closed my eyes, I thought I felt its claws on the bedclothes, or its hot breath on my face, and I was glad to assure myself that it was still in its old place in the roof. At last, somebody blew out the candle; and then, for the first time, I screamed. I could not bear to think what the horrid creature would do in the darkness. And then, to my delight, I heard my father's voice. His presence reassured me. Relighting the candle, he took me up into the attic and showed me that there was no wolf there. Then, standing the light where it stood before, he proved to me that the object of my terror was merely the shadow of a bracket that projected from the wall. And then we laughed together, he and I. And, soothed and comforted, I fell asleep.

Since then I have made friends with the shadows. I was strolling by the riverside last evening, and could not help feeling that, after all, the shadows are wonderfully beautiful. The shadows of the clouds as they floated over the corn; the shadows of the swallows as they flitted across my path; the long, long shadows of the poplars as they crept so noise-

lessly along the green, green grass! They seemed like mute hands pointing to the east, as though to tell me that the sun, sinking in one direction, would soon rise again in the other. The beauty of the evening was largely made up of the shadows. And so I have come to see that the things that once filled my soul with horror and dismay are not only destitute of menace but are part of the wealthy enrichment of a very wondrous world.

Now as I look back across the years at that boyish experience of mine, the terror that then froze my young blood seems typical of half the fears I have since felt. Plato used to say that we are like creatures living in a cave: all that we know of reality is represented by the shadows cast upon the wall by the moving figures passing by. Let any man take the trouble to sit down and deliberately make a list of all the things that have intimidated him, from his infancy upwards, and he will discover to his amazement that nine-tenths of them were shadows. I do not mean that we are startled by phantoms or by fancies. A shadow differs from either of these inasmuch as it is the genuine reflection of a reality. 'Certes,' exclaims Chaucer, 'a shadow is not the same thing as the thing of which it is a shadow, but a shadow hath the likeness of the thing of which it is a shadow!' And it is a distorted and grotesque likeness. To the nervous child, shuddering in his dark room, the shadow of the bedpost, cast by a passing candle, looks for all the world like a giant

or a hobgoblin. It is all very well for Shakespeare's Ratcliff to exhort his royal master to cast away his fear of shadows. 'Be not afraid of shadows, good my lord!' As Richard himself indicated in his reply, the difficulty is not dispelled quite so cheaply.

> By the Apostle Paul, shadows to-night
> Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
> Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers.

I have a good deal of sympathy with the unhappy monarch. Shadows are horrible things.

In the course of my saunter by the riverside last evening, I saw, seated on the soft grass that slopes down sharply to the water's edge, a very happy little party. It consisted of Lionel Conway, his wife, and her sister. The sister was playing with a child, a little fellow of three. 'It was too hot to put him to bed,' the mother explained, 'so we brought him out for an hour whilst the house cools down.' Lionel fought at Gallipoli, was wounded at Lone Pine, and sent home. He made an excellent recovery and, a few months later, I had the pleasure of marrying him to Hettie Yonge, who was very proud, and very worthy, of him. I had never before caught him in the humour to speak of his experiences. But last night the murmur of the river and the softness of the gloaming worked their charm, and his tongue was liberated.

'Now, tell me, Leo,' I demanded, when he seemed

to have said all that he was likely to say, 'were you ever afraid!'

'Yes, I was!' he replied, starting up and sitting erect. 'I remember that as I went down the side of the ship into the boat on the night of the landing, I was horribly afraid that, under fire, I should lose my head and become panic-stricken!'

'And did you?'

'Not a bit! But I was afraid of it, all the same!'

Now this twilight confession is worthy of careful analysis. Let us put it under a microscope. We shall then discover that we have here, not fear, but the fear of fear. We have, that is to say, not the substance, but the shadow thrown by that substance. Fear is a real thing; but Lionel Conway was not afraid. He was merely afraid of being afraid. He was therefore being frightened by a shadow. I believe that this state of mind is very common. In the first of his famous essays, Montaigne makes a precisely similar admission. 'The thing that I am most afraid of is fear,' he says; and in the second of the essays he elaborates the thought. It is because this shadow-warfare was such a terrifying affair to this brilliant Frenchman four hundred years ago, to our young Australian only yesterday, as well as to a thousand others like them, that one of the wisest philosophers of all time turned his attention to the theme. 'Be not afraid of fear!' he says, in the Book of Proverbs. I confess that, until I turned the matter over in my mind in the course

of my walk home in the dusk last evening, I never detected the striking significance of those arresting words.

Nine times out of ten, the things that scare a man out of his faith are shadows—merely shadows. His case is none the less pitiable on that account and must not be treated the less sympathetically. The fearsome forms that flitted eerily across the bedroom wall and ceiling were shadows—merely shadows; but the terror that they inspired was just as paralysing as that which would have been excited by the ghouls and hobgoblins for which we took them. A wise mother, finding her babes in terror of the ghostly shapes that glide across the wall, will never resort to derision. She will deal with them as my father dealt with me. She will soothe and sympathize and explain, until the little people themselves do the laughing, and then—but not till then—she will laugh with them. A young fellow tells me that it is the sorrow of his life that he has lost his father's faith. I can see at a glance that he has done nothing of the kind. If he had really lost his father's faith he would feel very differently. A man only abandons a creed when he is convinced of its falsity. If this young man were really convinced of the falsity of his father's convictions, he would rejoice in his deliverance from the thraldom of error. The fact that he sorrows so sincerely over his imaginary loss shows that his father's faith still holds his heart, although he does not know it. He is being scared by

shadows. I must try to soothe him, sympathize with him, and demonstrate to him that the pain which he evinces is the best tribute that his father's faith could possibly receive at his hands.

Mark Rutherford tells us that it was one of the great days of his inner experience when he discovered that shadows are no objects of fear. 'I happened,' he says, 'to hear an atheist discoursing on the follies of theism. If he had made the world, he would have made it much better. He would not have racked innocent souls with years of torture that tyrants might live in splendour. He would not have permitted the earthquake to swallow up thousands of harmless mortals and so forth.' Mark Rutherford left the lecture and began to think the thing out, and he soon saw that the atheist's argument was shallow enough. 'On whatever lines the world may be framed,' he says, 'there must be distinction, difference, a higher and a lower; and the lower, relatively to the higher, must always be an evil. The supremest bliss would not be bliss if it were not distinct from something else not so supreme. Perfectly uninterrupted, infinite light, without shadow, is a physical absurdity. I see a thing because it is lighted, but also because of the differences of light, or, in other words, because of shade; and without shade the universe would be objectless and, in fact, invisible. The atheist was dreaming of shadowless light, a contradiction in terms. All this came to me, and was a great comfort to me.' He discovered,

that is to say, that, just because the world is so effulgently lighted, there are shadows everywhere. And the sceptical lecturer, scared by the shadows, was allowing them to destroy his enjoyment of the light.

Who ever heard a man avow his disbelief in God without at the same time discovering that the doubter had been frightened out of his faith by a shadow?

'I would give anything to believe in God,' a man said to me not long ago, 'but I can't, I simply can't!'

'And why not?' I asked.

And then the floodgates were opened. He described to me the God in whom he did not, and could not, believe. What had happened? At Brocken, in Prussian Saxony, the highest summit of the Harz Mountains, a weird and awe-inspiring phenomenon is to be witnessed at sunrise and sunset each day. If a man stands on the summit when the sun is setting, or rising, over the plains below, a huge and ghostly shadow of himself is flung athwart the banks of cloud in the opposite sky. It is called the Spectre of Brocken, and, years ago, simple barbarians climbed to the summit that they might behold and adore the gigantic figure in the heavens. But one day there came disillusionment. They discovered that, in worshipping the huge and ghostly form upon the clouds, they were merely reverencing the shadow of themselves! Then they worshipped the terrible shadow no longer, but sought with earnest and hungry minds for the living and true God. One day

soon my troubled friend will have a precisely similar experience. He will find that the God who has disappointed him is but the shadow of himself projected on his sky. It is the magnified reflection of his own loves and hates, his own pettiness and passion. In it he can no longer believe; nor can I. But now that he has peered into his empty soul and found that he has been the victim of a Shadow, I am not without hope that he will find the satisfaction of his craving and the realization of his aspirations in the happy discovery of that radiant Reality whom he has so long ignored. The men who gazed from the splintered summit of Brocken at the ugly shadow on the clouds invariably had their backs turned to the beauty of the sunrise.

The nearest approach to a practical philosophy of the subject, and the most notable narrative of actual shadow-warfare, was given us by Carlyle. Everybody remembers the vivid and rugged experience outlined in his 'Everlasting No.' He was in Paris at the time. 'I lived,' he assures us, 'in a continual indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what. Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French capital was I, one sultry dogday, in a close atmosphere, and perambulating pavements as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Doubtless my spirits were little cheered by all this when, all at once, there arose a thought in me, and I asked myself: What art thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a

coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Let it come, then; I will meet it and defy it! And as I so thought, there rushed as it were a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base fear away from me for ever. I was strong, of unknown strength, a spirit, almost a god. It is from this hour that I incline to date my spiritual new birth; perhaps, I directly thereupon began to be a Man!' Here you have a terrified soul suddenly discovering that the hosts that assailed and threatened it were shadow-hosts, and bravely resolving to defy them.

He is a very wise man who can readily distinguish a shadow from a substance. As Chaucer told us just now, the two are so very much alike; we may easily be deceived. When Sir David Wilkie was visiting the Escurial just a hundred years ago, he stood for awhile admiring Titian's famous picture of the Lord's Supper. An old Jeronomite approached him. 'Do you know,' said the stranger, 'I have sat daily in sight of that picture for nearly three score years. During that time my companions have dropped off one after another; all who were my seniors, all who were my contemporaries, and most of those who were younger than myself. More than one generation has passed away, and

there the figures in the picture have remained unchanged! I look at them till I sometimes think that *they* are the realities and *we* are but the shadows!' It is certainly very confusing.

On the eve of the poll at Bristol, when Edmund Burke rose to address a crowded and excited audience, a note was suddenly slipped into his hand telling him that the strain of the campaign had been too much for his opponent; he was dead. Burke paused for a moment. Then, to a hushed assembly, he made the tragic announcement, and added, impressively, 'What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue!'

'What shadows we are!' exclaimed the old monk at the Escurial.

'What shadows we are!' exclaimed the orator at Bristol.

'What shadows we are!' cry the Law and the Prophets.

'What shadows we are!' cry the Church and the Sacraments.

And the Reality? There is but one! *'All these things,'* says Paul, *'are Shadows, and the Reality is Christ!'* The Reality is Christ! And only the man who has seen something of the glory of that radiant Reality will discover, in the Shadow-show, the loveliness of which I caught a fleeting hint last night.

V

THE SQUIRRELS

But before I talk about the squirrels I must offer an apology to a certain paling fence. I feel very much ashamed of myself. I have been unconscionably slow in detecting the immense and manifold significances of such fences. I must have passed millions of palings in my time; but, alas, my ears were heavy and my eyes were dim. I heard nothing and I saw nothing. It was the old sad story:

> A paling on the garden's rim
> A wooden paling was to him
> And it was nothing more.

But, quite recently, my eyes have been opened. I happen to have passed a certain paling fence some scores of times. It allowed me, on several occasions, to pass it in the old blind way. Then, one afternoon, I thought I heard a whisper. It was a very shy and timid whisper, such a whisper as a thing might give which was too modest to throw its friendship at me, yet too compassionate to deprive me for ever of the advantages that such a friendship would confer. From that moment I cultivated the acquaintance of the paling fence. I stopped; had a good look at it; asked it questions; was charmed by

its replies. At length, instead of whispering coyly, it became positively garrulous. Whenever I passed, we indulged in conversation. When one becomes intimate with people, he covets their photographs, and, in their absence, gazes fondly on their faces still. My friendship with the palings reached this pleasant stage. I allowed the fence to photograph itself upon the retina of my eye. And now I can see it when those eyes are shut. Indeed, sitting in my armchair by the fire last night, I could see nothing else! I was amazed that it took me so long to learn its secrets, and I resolved to pen this humble apology to-day.

It all came about through my fondness for the squirrels. Somebody told me that, in Poynton Grove, I should find as many squirrels as my heart could wish. Accordingly, whenever I had occasion to go in that direction, I made it my business to approach my destination by way of Poynton Grove. Poynton Grove, I ought to explain, consists of a number of palatial residences standing in spacious grounds. The beautiful homes, with their adjacent lawns and conservatories, are to some extent concealed from observation by a screen of tall pine trees which extends, on both sides, from one end of the Grove to the other. The pines stand a few feet back from the pavement; and, separating the passer-by from the trunks of the pine-trees, stands—*the paling fence!* Now, when first I walked along Poynton Grove, I took no notice of the paling fence. I was

thinking only of the squirrels. And, thinking of the squirrels, I took two things for granted.

I took it for granted that the squirrels, if they were to be seen at all, would be seen up among the branches of the pine-trees.

I took it for granted that, since my approach would have disturbed and driven into concealment any squirrels that were immediately about me, my only chance lay in scrutinizing closely the branches of the trees some little distance ahead.

Like most of the things that we take for granted, both these assumptions proved to be false. Cherishing these convictions, and acting on these principles, I walked twelve times from end to end of Poynton Grove and never once caught even a fleeting glimpse of a squirrel! But the thirteenth time proved to be my lucky time. It often is! Born on a Friday, I was married on the thirteenth day of the month; and, whenever I go to sea, I invariably select cabin No. 13. The only man I ever met who attached any importance to the number thirteen was old Donald Crabtree, a horsedealer at Mosgiel. Donald would have gone without his dinner rather than have sat down with a dozen others at table. But I lost faith in Donald and his convictions on that subject when I discovered that he would never accept twelve pounds for a horse if he could by any possibility get one pound more! But, be that as it may, it was on my thirteenth journey through Poynton Grove that the paling fence whispered to me. Strangely

enough, I was not then looking for squirrels. It is curious that we often find the things we want when we give up looking for them. It happened that, on that particular afternoon, I had an appointment at the far end of the Grove; I had no time to spare; and I was walking at a fair pace along the middle of the roadway. And, just as I was turning the bend about half-way up the Grove, a squirrel ran out from between the palings on my left, went frisking across the road at my feet, and vanished between the palings on my right. It was thus that the paling fence made its first overture. I caught the whisper and resolved to follow up the hint that it had given.

When next I walked through Poynton Grove I saw quite a number of squirrels. I found what I sought through abandoning my assumptions. I gave up scrutinizing the treetops and I gave up looking ahead. The squirrel that I saw on my thirteenth trip was not in the treetops and it was no distance ahead of me. Instead of looking above my head, I resolved to look about my feet; and instead of looking a long way ahead I determined to look just beside me. This new policy brought me face to face with a paling fence. And when I stood facing the paling fence, I made a most interesting discovery. To begin with, I noticed that a paling fence consists of two parts—palings and spaces—and that observation was valuable in itself. Tennyson says that

> . . . words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the soul within.

So does a paling fence. The palings are to conceal, the spaces are to reveal. The fence is like a veil on a lady's face; it shows a little and it hides a little; and the beauty that it displays sets you longing to see the beauty that it screens. But this is only by the way. My main discovery was much more subtle. Indeed, I do not know that I can make my meaning clear in black and white; but I will do my best. A paling fence, we have seen, consists of two parts—palings and spaces. Here in front of me was a paling and a space, a paling and a space, a paling and a space, and so *ad infinitum*. But I noticed that, if I concentrated my attention on the paling fence a few feet ahead of me, I could see nothing but palings. The spaces at that angle, are invisible. Each paling hides the space immediately beyond it and appears to join its next-door neighbour. The impression upon the eye is the impression of a continuous wooden barrier. The flowers on the other side of the fence are completely hidden; you see nothing but the pathway, the palings, and the treetops. But now pursue the other policy! Turn sharply round and look at—or look through—the paling fence immediately beside you. At once the spaces predominate over the palings. The line of vision commanded by one eye, added to the line of vision commanded by the other eye, furnishes you with an almost uninterrupted view of the gardens and lawns on the other side of the palings. Indeed, if a particularly beautiful rhododendron in

the gardens, or a squirrel playing on the lawns, captivates your attention, you entirely forget the existence of the palings and enter into the felicity afforded by the spaces. But this happiness comes only to those who look *beside* them; it never comes to those who look *ahead*.

Now, in walking through Poynton Grove for the fourteenth time, I soon found myself peering through the palings at a handsome lawn. I stood for a moment or two admiring the arrangement of the flower-beds. And then, just as I was thinking of resuming my walk, I thought I saw something move. I watched more closely, and, a few seconds later, out from behind a shrub on the far side of the lawn, dashed a little grey squirrel! He was quickly followed by another. After watching their antics for awhile, I discovered a third sitting by himself on a distant section of the lawn. I visited the spot several times and found them always arranged in the same way—the two together and the third by himself. I took the children to see them. They quickly formulated theories and bestowed names. Furry and Fluffy, they said, were husband and wife; but Sulky was a surly old bachelor who was too fond of his own company to have anything to do with the others. But, like most of our fine theories and hasty judgments, this interpretation quickly broke down. I visited Poynton Grove very frequently after that. I could never get any nearer to Furry and Fluffy; perhaps they were too happy

in each other's society to desire mine. But Sulky grew quite friendly. He would never come close enough to be touched; but, when I turned on my heel to go, he would scamper across the lawn, run up the paling fence, and go bounding along the top of it a few feet in front of me. My own idea was that Furry and Fluffy were only courting, and that Sulky was too much of a gentleman to impose his company upon them. The only fault that I can find in him is that, to me, at least, his friendship proved fickle. I went along Poynton Grove one day. I had only to stand in my old spot for about three minutes in order to see Furry and Fluffy. They came prancing out into the middle of the lawn and sat there facing each other, their tails gracefully curled above their heads. But Sulky seemed strangely slow. I became anxious. I began to fear that something must have happened to him. At length, however, out he came, looking, I fancied, somewhat ashamed of himself. I turned several times as if to go; but he came no nearer. What could be the matter? And then the secret leaked out! A fourth squirrel—whom we afterwards knew as Silky—came bounding down a pine-trunk and ran straight across to Sulky. I felt that my place in his affections had been usurped. Emulating Sulky's earlier chivalry, I came sadly away, leaving them all to their felicity. Furry had his Fluffy; Sulky had his Silky; there was no room for me. Yet I was glad to have met them; and certainly my life would never have been enriched by

this slice of romance had I never learned the secret of the paling fence.

The paling fence taught me that it is best to take short views of life. As long as I looked some distance ahead, I saw nothing but palings. When I turned sharply round and faced the fence just beside me, I saw nothing but little grey squirrels.

And the paling fence taught me to take life as I find it. It is much of a mixture—palings and spaces, palings and spaces—but it depends upon ourselves as to whether we view it at such an angle that it appears to be all palings or at such an angle that we forget that the palings exist. I have just read the pathetic life story of Henry Fielding. It was the outstanding characteristic of 'the father of our English fiction,' as Sir Walter Scott called him, that he did not believe in unadulterated virtue or in unmitigated vice. His heroines, however lovable, are never angelic; his scoundrels, however detestable, are never fiendish. He found men a mixture and he so depicts them. His heroes are speckled by grievous faults and his villains occasionally astound you by their downright goodness of heart. He tells you of 'the trembling wretch who has been hanged for a robbery, but to whom the judge spoke cordially because he had been a kind father, husband and son'; one of the most amiable characters in his first novel was 'a lad who hath since been transported for robbing a henroost.' And his greatest creation of all—Tom Jones—is 'a piebald miscel-

lany' characterized by 'bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire.' Fielding stoutly defended this method of interpreting human nature. 'I will venture to affirm,' he says, 'that I have known some of the best sort of men in the world who would not have scrupled, under certain circumstances, to cut a friend's throat; and I have known fellows, whom no man should be seen speaking to, capable of the highest acts of friendship and benevolence.' I myself had to deal quite recently with the case of a man who was imprisoned for beating his wife; and who, the day after his release from gaol, threw his life away without a moment's hesitation in order to save that of his companion. Life is very much like my paling fence—a great mixture. You can concentrate your attention, if you will, on the palings; or you can, if you be so minded, make the most of the spaces. But, as a general rule, the people who make the most of the spaces see the squirrels.

There they are—palings and spaces; spaces and palings! It takes both to make up the fence. You cannot reduce them to a common substance—half paling and half space. It is better to have things as they are. There are things on which you can compromise; and there are things on which compromise is impossible. 'All government,' said Burke, 'all government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act, is founded on compromise. We balance inconveniences; we give and take; we remit some rights that we may

enjoy others.' To be sure! There is a sense in which the paling fence is itself a compromise. The owner might have put up a brick wall; or he might have left his property entirely unprotected. But, being a reasonable man, he wants to keep stray cattle from wandering over his lawns, and yet he wants me to be able to see the squirrels. So he puts up a paling fence. The paling fence is a compromise and a very excellent compromise. But that is as far as the principle of compromise will carry you. It has its limits. Macaulay saw that. In discussing one of the greatest crises in our history, he observes that while every great movement is open to compromise on its purely *political* side, it cannot be compromised on its strictly logical side. 'Logic,' he says, 'admits of no compromise.' And here you have the logic of facts! Palings are palings and spaces are spaces; you cannot melt them down into a filmy, gelatinous substance that is half the one and half the other.

Matthew Arnold demonstrates the absurdity of any such attempt. He is discussing the miracles. And he shows that you must take them or leave them; you cannot split the difference. Half a miracle is as difficult to explain as a whole one. 'It is,' he says, 'as if we were startled by the extravagance of supposing Cinderella's fairy god-mother to have actually changed the pumpkin into a coach and six, but should suggest that she did really change it into a one-horse cab!' He goes on to say that many people feel an insurmountable suspicion

of the story that tells how Peter found a fish with the tribute-money in its mouth; and they suggest that what really happened was that Peter caught a fish, sold it, and paid the tribute with the money he thus got. 'This,' says Matthew Arnold, 'is like saying that all that Cinderella's godmother really did was to sell her pumpkins and pay for a cab for her godchild with the money!' The thing is preposterous. It is better to let things stand as they are. There is the record that you *can* understand and there is the record that you *can't* understand. There is the thing that is *within* human experience and there is the thing that is *beyond* human experience. There is the *human* element in life and there is the *divine* element in life. They stand side by side. You are in a realm in which compromise is out of the question. As with my palings, you can survey life from such an angle that the materialistic view fills the eye, or you can view it from such an angle that the materialistic falls away and you gaze into eternity. But they are both there, the human and the divine—the palings and the spaces—and it is best to recognize things as they are.

VI

NEW TOYS

We have an infinite capacity for growing tired of things. It is one of the noblest traits of our humanity; it is the hallmark of our grandeur. Watch for a moment the antics of this baby playing on the nursery floor! He has just survived the wild excitements of a birthday, and as you glance around his playroom you will see at once that he has sharply divided all his possessions into two distinct classes. There, in the corner, are the old toys of which he has grown tired; and here, in the middle of the room, are the new ones of which he hasn't! In a few weeks Christmas-time will come; Santa Claus will bring a fresh supply of wonders; and these birthday presents that are to-day invested with all the charm of novelty will then be added to the pile of fallen idols. He will weary of them; and what then? Shall we blame him, chide him, scold him? Shall we call him fickle, volatile, inconstant? Shall we take away the new treasures in order to compel him to play with the old? Do it at your peril—*and at his*! If you are half as wise as he is, you will smile at his merriment and then return to the sitting-room rejoicing that, up there in the nursery, you have seen a man in the making! You have seen a

man moved by all the traditional instincts of the race! For, in preferring the new toys to the old ones, this baby of yours is but expressing, with all a child's simplicity and all a child's candour, one of the deepest and most fundamental laws of our humanity. They may call him inconstant who will; it is always easy to call people names. They may scold him who must. Those who, destitute of all imagination and all heart, care to remove from him the new toys of which he is so proud will, as a result of this painful discipline, cure him in time of his preference for things which are bright and fresh and new. But let them have a care lest, in curing him of this, they rob him of the glory of his manhood and reduce him to the level of the beasts that perish!

For here, in the nursery, with the old toys relegated to the corner and the new ones holding pride of place in the middle of the room, one sees reflected, as in a mirror, the history of the ages. Man has made his way from savagery to civilization by the simple process of growing tired of his toys. His first toy was a stick torn from the forest, and it hugely delighted him. It seemed wonderful to him that, by means of it, he could extend his personality and amplify his powers. It served him as a weapon; it served him as a plough; it served him as a staff. With it he fought his enemies; with it he drove off the beasts of prey; with it he subjugated flocks and herds; with it he tilled the soil; with it he supported

himself in all his nomadic wanderings. He thought it a most wonderful contrivance; he saw no way in which it could be improved upon. Here was the child with his first toy! But as time went on he found other toys; and each discovery led him to regard its predecessor with contempt. He found that by rubbing the stick upon the rock he could sharpen it; he accordingly sharpened a small stick and it became an arrow; he sharpened a big one and it became a spear. And thus, by growing tired of one toy and by grasping at a better, he has been led on, stage by stage, to all those terrific engines of destruction and defence by which, when war breaks out, the planet is now shaken. Again he sharpened the stick with which he scratched the earth, and it became a spade; he remodelled it and it became a plough; he improved upon it and, step by step, brought into being all the bewildering contrivances that make up the wonder of modern agriculture. Similarly, he grew tired of the stick with which he walked. It helped him, but it did not help him much. Then came a really tremendous day; one of the most notable dates in the history of the planet; the pity of it is that there is no record by which we can trace it. In hacking to pieces the circular trunk of a tree that he had felled, one short log went rolling down the grassy hillside. In a trice, Man saw a new and wonderful toy! A wheel; two wheels; four wheels; think of the significance of it! He can ride! He hurls his staff into the river and laughs

as it floats away on the tide. That first rude trolley gives way to a chariot; the chariot yields to the coach; the coach is succeeded by the train; and, along branch lines of development, we have motor-cars, aeroplanes, and all our modern means of locomotion and conveyance.

He grew tired of the stick with which he *fought*; and, as a result, we have vast armaments and high explosives!

He grew tired of the stick with which he *scratched the soil*; and, as a result, we have machinery that can turn the wilderness into a fruitful field!

He grew tired of the stick with which he *walked*; and, as a result, we have airships and electric trains!

Who, surveying the pageant of the past in this broad outline, would dare to scold the child on the nursery floor for neglecting the old toys in the corner in favour of the new ones in the middle of the room?

But we must be cautious. The matter is not as simple as it seems. Let us move circumspectly or we shall miss the truth after all. Man has the defects of all his virtues; the defects are proportionate to the virtues; the greater the virtue, the greater the defect. Our virtues easily become vices. It is a fine thing for the race that we grow tired of things; but it is only a fine thing when our weariness and discontent arise from, or lead to, the possession of things still better. The child on the nursery floor is quite right in forsaking the toys that amuse him

slightly for the toys that amuse him greatly. The clockwork mouse with the broken spring and the tin soldiers that can no longer stand were very good fun a week ago; but now he has a rockinghorse and a rifle; and he is wise in making the most of them. But he must have a care. This sort of thing must not become a habit. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything; and there is a right way and a wrong way of getting tired of things. It may be that, on the heap in the corner, there is a top that will still spin when the rockinghorse will no longer rock and a ball that will still bounce when the rifle will no longer shoot! It may be.

About half a mile from this suburban home of mine there is a large tract of vacant land entirely surrounded by a thick belt of tall fir-trees. Indeed, it is so concealed and secluded that I never suspected its existence until, in poking about among the trees the other day, I unexpectedly emerged upon this great silent wilderness. I soon found that I was not alone. Five little grey squirrels went bounding away through the grass at my feet and were soon safe among the tree-tops. A big opossum looked down at me from an overhanging branch, and the kookaburras were everywhere. The place was teeming with life.

'Frank,' I said at teatime, 'I found a place this afternoon where there are lots of squirrels and 'possums and laughing-jackasses. Will you come with me some day?'

His eyes sparkled, and one afternoon, a few days later, we set out. When we came to the spot, we walked silently through the belt of firs; but no squirrels started up at our approach. We closely scrutinized the branches of the fir-tree; the tree in which I had seen the opossum; but there was no sign of him. We could not see or hear a laughing-jackass anywhere. The place seemed deserted. I was disappointed, more for his sake than my own. I felt that I had brought him under false pretences. But I noticed that he was not depressed. I sat down at the foot of a giant gum-tree hoping that the shy things that I wished to coax into visibility would yet deign to reveal themselves; and, sitting there, I saw that my little companion was happy among the grasses. In great excitement he brought me a handful of shivering grass; a few tufts of fern; some cones that had fallen from the firs; and a couple of dandelions. He saw wonders everywhere. When we reached home I had a dismal tale to tell of the things we did *not* see; but he, wiser far, told of what we *did*. In wild delight he bore his trophies to his mother and heaped the drooping grasses in her lap. What was the difference between us?

The difference was that whilst, to *him,* the pretty grasses were like the new toys in the middle of the room, to *me* they were like the old toys in the corner. Some day, perhaps, he, too, will cease to be charmed by the shivering grass. He will find new toys. We all of us grow tired too quickly of the things that

charmed us first. The world spreads its glamour at our feet and our eyes are dazzled by the glare. We become absorbed in the rush and struggle and excitement. We become fascinated by dreams of love and power and gold. And, lost in thoughts of these things, we go tramping through fields far fairer than the field among the fir-trees, and we take no notice of the most graceful grasses and most fragrant flowers. And it is only when our new toys begin to pall upon us that we recognize that we lost too soon our love of those that charmed us long ago. We should have been richer and happier if, moderating our enthusiasm for the new toys, we had kept in our hearts some lingering fondness for the old ones.

Let us pass from a scene of simplicity to a scene of squalor. Let us leave the fragrant atmosphere of the fields for the fetid atmosphere of the Divorce Court. What a contrast! Here everything is sordid, polluting, revolting! Here you see, not Nature, but human nature, and human nature at its worst. Here, day after day, year in and year out, its baseness, shamelessness, and cruelty are ruthlessly and pitilessly exposed. The judge who presides in a Divorce Court must at times find it hard to believe that man was made in the image of God. He grows old in hearing thousands and thousands of cases, each one of which is, in some respect, more sickening than the last. It must require a vigorous mental effort to shake the hideous thing from his mind of an evening before sitting down to dinner at a softly-

lit and daintily-decorated table with his wife and daughters. As he lounges in his easy-chair later on, smoking his cigar, does the horrid pageant of the day rush back upon his mind? If so, it must sometimes occur to him that, whilst each case has its own distinctive features, in one respect at least they are all alike. In each case the man—or the woman—has managed unskilfully the important business of getting tired of things. *He* saw a fair face and a lovely figure, and his whole soul was captivated. He had never beheld anything so beautiful, and he longed to make it all his own. *She* yielded to the wild persuasion of his passion; and for awhile they tasted joy to the full. And then other toys—money, sport, society—absorbed his thought; and he forgot. These things became the bright toys in the middle of the room and *she* was numbered among the neglected things in the corner. Then Somebody Else appeared! Somebody Else saw in her the beauty that had once swept her husband off his feet—the beauty that her husband had no longer eyes to see. Admiration was sweet to her in the old days when her life was all sunshine; it was even sweeter when her life was all shade. And thus came the tragedy of which, in the old days, she had never even dreamed. Her husband had badly mismanaged the business of getting tired of things. As His Honour sits there, his slippered feet on the fender and his cigar between his lips, it must sometimes occur to him that this is the basic blunder at the back of every case.

Yes, our faculty for growing tired of things is one of the greatest things about us. It is the dynamic of all human progress. But, like all our really great prerogatives, it is liable to sad misuse and terrible abuse. Unless we keep both eyes wide open, we may get tired of the wrong things or get tired of the right things at the wrong time! One may grow tired of anything. The prodigal even grew tired of home! Mid pleasures and palaces there is no place like it; yet many a wanderer has wearied of it and looked back wistfully upon it from afar. In all our churches—churches of every order and of every clime—it is the duty of the officers, once a year or so, to scrutinize carefully the list of members. With our knack of giving commonplace names to the most momentous things, we call it the Revision of the Roll. It is a tremendous business. It needs all the wisdom and the tact and the severity and the patience of which the most devout and discreet church-officers in the world are capable. The secretary reads the names.

'Archibald Scotford!'

What memories the name revives! We all remember the circumstances under which the name was inscribed upon the Roll. We little thought in those days that we might have sadly to erase it. Archie's conversion was a wonderful experience. He used to speak of it with glowing countenance and a heart too full for utterance. For years he was never absent from the services, and he would

count the days to Communion Sundays, Anniversary Sundays, and other special festivals. You could ask Archie to do anything, and he would revel in being permitted to undertake the task. And to think that the time has come at which the reading of his name is followed by this long and painful and ominous pause!

'Archibald Scotford!' the secretary says again.

It is months since Archie was at church.

'I met him,' says one of the officers, 'last Sunday. It was Communion Sunday, you remember; but Archie, in flannels, was on his way to tennis. He says he must have a little recreation!'

What has happened? Archie has found a new toy, that is all! Archie's name is sadly removed, and the secretary continues:

'Thomas Treadmore!'

'Lucy Treadmore!'

The secretary reads the names. Tom and Lucy met at the church. They were heart and soul in everything. But after their marriage they gradually dropped off. There is so much to be done in the home and the garden; they are generally very tired on Saturday night; and they usually rest on Sundays. In their married life, Tom and Lucy have found a new toy, and everything else has been thrown to the corner. The names are dealt with and the secretary reads on:

'Arthur Whitelaw!'

'Mary Whitelaw!'

God laid a little child in their arms a year ago—the sweetest gift that even God could send—and we have never seen them since. The gift has weaned their hearts from the Giver!

It is a fine thing for us all, and a fine thing for the race, that we grow tired of things; but it would be just as well, every now and again, to rummage in the neglected heap in the corner and make sure that there is nothing there as worthy of our affection as the novelties in the middle of the room.

VII

THE SCARECROW

WALKING down Irving Road this afternoon, I beheld a spectacle that I hope I shall never forget. It would please me to think that some hazy recollection of it will visit me even in my last hours. I was strolling towards the river, enjoying the warmth and brilliance of the autumn sunshine. Passing some tall fir-trees in which a party of squirrels were making merry, I came upon a large kitchen garden, carefully laid out. And, in the middle of the garden, a scarecrow! Nor was the scarecrow alone. For, from the extremities of his outstretched arms, the gloves had fallen; and, on each of the bare stumps thus exposed, a blackbird sat, looking perfectly composed and triumphant. I had a good look at them, and moved away. I did not wish to see them fly; I wanted to retain in my mind the picture of the scarecrow with the blackbirds sitting on it. As I sat among the willows by the riverside a few minutes later I was surrounded by many lovely things; but the vision of the scarecrow with the blackbirds on his arms held all my thoughts; and, as I sit here at my desk to-night, the birds seem to be resting on their old perch still. Carlyle once hinted that, sooner or later, somebody would have to con-

struct a Philosophy of Scarecrows. 'We shall have to examine,' he makes Teufelsdrockh say in *Sartor Resartus,* 'we shall have to examine how far the Scarecrow, as a clothed person, is entitled to benefit of clergy and to trial by jury, nay, perhaps, considering his high function as a Defender of Property and a Sovereign armed with the terrors of the law, to a certain royal immunity and inviolability.' To this profound investigation, however, the learned Teufelsdrockh never applied his astute mind after all. I cannot hope to solve all the problems that he has raised; but I have set aside an hour this evening in which to soliloquize upon the spectacle that so delighted me this afternoon.

There are scarecrows in all the best gardens. I do not know who put them there. Wherever some particularly tempting cherries or some specially luscious strawberries are to be had, you will see a hideous and disreputable effigy, its arms absurdly outstretched, its ill-fitting garments flapping loosely on its stiff and bony limbs, whilst its hat droops forward as though its unshapely wearer were in a state of the most disgraceful intoxication. As with the virgins in the parable, so with the birds of the field, there are only two kinds—the wise and the foolish. A wise bird knows that a scarecrow is simply an advertisement. It announces, in a most forceful and picturesque way, that, in the garden which it does its best to adorn, some very juicy and most delicious fruit is to be had for the picking. The

sharp eyes of this observant songster have noticed that men never by any chance erect scarecrows in fields lying fallow. I once journeyed for two thousand miles across a desert, and never saw a scarecrow all the way. If I were a bird I should spend all my time looking out for scarecrows. I should perch on church spires, telegraph posts, and other lofty eminences, and sweep the horizon in every direction in the hope that I should somewhere catch sight of one of these angular and hideous effigies. Every thoughtful bird learns in time to regard a scarecrow as an invitation to a banquet. When, from afar, he sees the gardener hanging a worn-out coat over a broken broomstick, he feels as a hungry man feels when he hears the dinner-bell ring. The bird sings his blithest song in anticipation of the good things coming, and, as soon as the gardener has stuck the hat on the top of the upright stake and withdrawn from the scene of his labours, the discerning bird swoops down upon the delicacies to which the scarecrow calls him.

Is there a moral question involved? Does somebody say that in pursuing this strain I am setting a premium upon theft and snapping my fingers at the eighth commandment? I am doing nothing of the kind. It was not to starlings and blackbirds that Moses said, *'Thou shalt not steal!'* It is all very well for the proud owner of this lovely garden to say that the birds are thieves; they are no more dishonest than he is. Strawberries and cherries were

sent into the world for the birds to eat, and the birds have a perfect right to get them if they can. If—to resume my former flight of fancy—if I were a bird, and if I were a bird with the most tender conscience that ever subsisted with a coat of feathers, I should feel no scruples whatever in feasting to my heart's content on the strawberries and cherries in your garden. The struggle for the fruit is part of Nature's eternal feud. I have a right to it; you have a right to it; it is a battle of wits; there is no dishonesty on either side; we must not call each other hard names. If you wish to keep me from devouring the fruit your only chance is to erect a scarecrow. Then my discretion will be put to the test. If I am wise I shall treat the scarecrow as if it were a dinner-gong. If I am as silly as you evidently assume me to be, I shall be too timid to venture, and shall never know the taste of the tempting berries.

The foolish bird, and the foolish bird only, is frightened by the scarecrow, and it pays the inevitable penalty for its folly; it misses the fruit. I have seen it happen again and again. Alec and Edward Frew were brothers. Whilst they were still in early manhood their father died, leaving them each five hundred pounds. Alec was not exactly reckless; but he was decidedly enterprising, and he developed a keen eye for a good investment. He took risks, of course, just as the bird takes risks when it flies into the field that is guarded by the scarecrow. But, like

the bird, he got the fruit. He flourished, and, when I saw him last, he had a great and growing business. He lived in a beautiful home, and his children were at the University. Edward, on the other hand, was timid. He loved money as much as Alec, perhaps more; but his love of money took the opposite form. He was fearful of losing what he already possessed. That was his scarecrow. And, just as the unsightly effigy on the strawberry bed keeps the frightened bird from the fruit, so that dreadful scarecrow of his stood, all his life long, between Edward Frew and prosperity.

The finest scarecrow story in our literature occurs in the Old Testament. The garden in which it stood is that garden which inspired volumes of glowing verse. For Palestine was 'a good land; a land of brooks of water; of fountains that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive and honey; a land in which thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou shalt dig brass.' It was a land in which the people were to lack nothing. But when an advance guard of a dozen men went forward to inspect the land the majority of them saw only a scarecrow! They had no eyes for the flowery meadows all swarming with bees, or the hills all covered with the golden corn; they did not see the laughing valleys or the fruitful plains, the terraced vineyards or the forests of fruit, the

flocks dotting the mountainside, or the cattle half-buried in the long, rich grass; they only saw—or thought they saw—*the giants*!

Now, the question is: What became of those giants? The people eventually entered the land, and the record of their experiences is before us. But giants are as scarce as unicorns. What became of them all? What happened was this. The spies crossed the border, and the peasants told them hair-raising stories of the ferocity of the bandits. These robber-chiefs occasionally swept down upon the rural districts, levying toll on all the farms, vineyards, and orchards.

Some of those bandit chiefs were tall; they stood seven feet, perhaps!

To the terrified peasants—a people of small stature and feeble spirit—those marauders *seemed* immense—ten feet, perhaps!

As they told the story to the spies, the tale lost nothing in the telling. These Easterns, notoriously fond of the weird, the mysterious, the uncanny, depicted their tyrants as perfect monsters, standing twelve feet, perhaps!

To the timid Jews, peace-loving, conservative, dreading all new experiences, the narrative was blood-curdling. The monsters were magnified again! They felt that they themselves were mere insects that the giants could crush beneath their feet. And when they returned to their own people they persuaded themselves and their nervous audi-

tors that they had seen a land that was moving with the most frightful and inhuman beings. 'The land,' they declared, 'is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw were men of great stature. And there we saw the giants and the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.' On hearing this sensational story 'all the congregation of Israel lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept that night.' Such havoc may a scarecrow effect.

Two of the spies, however, saw that the thing was a scarecrow. Caleb and Joshua were like two birds who, having once perched on the scarecrow and tasted the fruit, were anxious to return to the garden. 'The land is a good land,' they cried, 'a land flowing with milk and honey! Fear not the people! They are bread for us! Let us go up!' And up they went! Of course! The testimony of one brave bird that has actually perched on the helpless arm of the scarecrow, and that has tasted for himself of the cherries, is of more value than that of a thousand cackling creatures sitting in a perfect paroxysm of terror on the wires and fences and tree-tops around.

In the same way, the fairest garden of which Bunyan tells us is the garden of the Palace Beautiful. And the most conspicuous feature of that garden is the scarecrow. For, just as Christian was approaching the lovely place, he saw two men coming towards him, running for their lives. The name

of the one was Timorous and that of the other Mistrust. 'Sirs,' said Christian, 'what is the matter? You run the wrong way!' Timorous answered that they were pilgrims to the city of Zion, but that, the farther they went, the more terrible were the dangers that they met. 'Yes,' chimed in his terrified companion, 'and just before us lie a couple of lions; and we could not think, if we came within reach, but they would presently pull us in pieces.' Christian was at first alarmed, but he reflected that the perils behind him were at least as great as the perils before, so he went on; and, coming near to the palace, discovered that the lions were chained. He heard them roar, but they did him no harm. Then he clapped his hands and went on till he came and stood before the gate where the porter was. And thus he arrived at the Palace Beautiful. It is the old story. The bird that dares the scarecrow tastes the fruit.

Faith is a bird that loves to perch on scarecrows. She knows that there is a certain amount of risk in doing so. But she knows, too, that only by taking such risks can she enjoy the fruits of the garden. She knows that there are scarecrows wherever there are strawberries; but she also knows that there are strawberries wherever there are scarecrows. If, frightened by the scarecrows, she remains on the tree-tops, the telephone wires, or the fences, she will find no strawberries there. It is better to take the risk. In this very room last night I was chatting

with Jack Bridges. Jack is one of the seniors at Grafton House School. He would very much like, he was telling me, to enlist in Christ's service and join the church, but he is fearful. He is beginning to feel the strength and fascination of the temptations that life will shortly spread at his feet. He fears lest, after having pledged himself to a life of discipleship and service, his behaviour should in some way put such a lofty profession to shame. I wish he would look in again this evening. I would tell him of the scarecrow that I saw this afternoon —the scarecrow with the blackbirds perched upon its arms! 'I am afraid,' Jack told me, *'I am afraid!'* By an ugly scarecrow—a scarecrow that has frightened thousands of timorous souls—he is being excluded from the fairest garden of all. He is very near to it. He is like a bird perched on the fence and looking wistfully at the strawberries. But the scarecrow keeps him from the fruit.

He reminds me of poor Mr. Despondency and his daughter, Miss Much-afraid. All through their pilgrimage they had been victimized by doubts and misgivings. By these terrors the sunniest scenes were shadowed for them. But when they came to the end of their journey they saw that all their fears were groundless. They begged their friends never to offer hospitality to the same dark thoughts. 'For, to be plain with you,' said Mr. Despondency, 'our fears are ghosts which we entertained when we first began to be pilgrims and could never afterwards

shake off.' Then Mr. Despondency entered the river in triumph, and his daughter went through the waters singing.

That is why I said in my opening sentences that it would please me to think that some hazy recollection of the scarecrow that I saw to-day would visit me in my last hours. For, like Miss Much-afraid, I should like to cross the river with a song. When my soul is preparing to wing her way to those gardens in which the fairest fruits flourish, I should like her to feel that the ugly things that stand between her and her felicity are things that have no power to impede her progress or to do her the slightest harm. The grim figure that men call death is a scarecrow, that is all.

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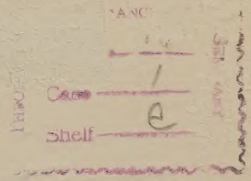
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